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BY

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TO

HIS GRACE

THE

DUKE of NEWCASTLE.

MY LORD,

YOU being one of my oldest Pupils now living, as well as of the greatest Dignity and Consequence I ever had the Care of, having been placed under my Tuition at *Clare-Hall* in the Year 1737, by the late Duke of *Newcastle*; and having never received the least Mark of Favour either from him or yourself, (except

that

[illegible]

[illegible] conscientiously

discharged my Duty) though I am

[illegible] my Failure of a

[illegible] you both on my

Part, I [illegible] to present these Ser-

[illegible] and remain

Your Grace's

most obedient

Servant,

Chap. Hall. Mar.

[illegible] DARD.

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SERMON I.

Preached on COMMENCEMENT SUNDAY, July 5, 1761.

ACTS xxvi. 29.

And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.

WE have in this chapter a very remarkable instance of that disinterested zeal, with which the blessed Apostle was animated, for the honour and advancement of the Christian cause. Though at this time a prisoner, and standing before those who had power either to condemn or to release him, he boldly maintains the [illegible] for preaching which he was then [illegible]

So far was he from being ashamed of the gospel, that he desires to glory in nothing else save the cross of Jesus Christ; professing himself ready not only to be bound, but also to die for his name. Every opportunity of publishing the glad tidings of salvation was embraced by him with the utmost alacrity, such as the most public occasions; the presence of his declared enemies, and of persons of the highest rank and authority; thereby justifying his own professions, as well as verifying what the Lord had formerly declared to Ananias, *that he had appointed him for a chosen vessel, to bear his name before kings and the Gentiles.* Accordingly we find him in his chapter giving an account of himself, and the faith he professed, before king Agrippa, Festus the Roman governor, and other persons of distinction, in a very numerous assembly, the greater part of which were Jews. The arguments alledged by the Apostle from the prophecies of the Old Testament, for the proof of Jesus's being the true Messiah, had as was naturally to be expected, a very different

effect

effect upon Festus, an utter stranger to Moses and the prophets, and even to the true God, from what they had upon Agrippa, a Jew; and therefore as the Apostle observes, *expert in all such questions*. The former could consider the sufferings, death and resurrection of the Son of God, in no other light than as the whims and reveries of a man, whom *too much learning had made mad*. But the case was far otherwise with Agrippa, upon whom the Apostle, in the midst of his discourse, turns short with this spirited apostrophe, *King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets?* And then as suddenly correct himself, and answers his own question, *I know that thou believest*. It is evident, that the sense is here suspended, and that, had he not been interrupted, he would have added some such words as these: Believe then in that Christ, of whom these prophets so plainly did write. Agrippa certainly understood him so by the answer he makes, even before St. Paul could finish his sentence, *Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*. In which extraordinary confession we at once

ſee the power of truth, and the power of prejudice. Agrippa could not reſiſt the force of ſuch arguments, and, in ſpite of himſelf, is obliged to own his conviction; but then he could not bear the thought of parting with his eaſe and pleaſures, the honours and advantages he then enjoyed, which would be the conſequence of his becoming really a Chriſtian. So that there was a conteſt betwixt his reaſon and his paſſions, betwixt his head and his heart; till at laſt, by a ſort of compromiſe, they join in this cold and languid declaration, *Almoſt thou perſuadeſt me to be a Chriſtian.* There is ſomething in the Apoſtle's reply, which can never be enough admired, either for the humanity of the ſentiment, or the politeneſs and delicacy of the addreſs, *I would to God, that not only thou, but alſo all that hear me this day, were both almoſt and altogether ſuch as I am, except theſe bonds.* You ſay, O king, that almoſt I perſuade you to be, even what I am myſelf, a Chriſtian. O Sir, believe me when I tell you, that I have no other motive for perſuading you to be a Chriſtian, but my heartily

wiſhing

wiſhing you the greateſt happineſs which one man can wiſh to another; and therefore, would to God that you and every one elſe here preſent, were altogether ſuch as I am, not ſuch as Paul the priſoner, but as Paul the Chriſtian. May you have all my faith, all my hopes, and all my joy, without my ſufferings, and my chains.

Before I paſs on to the main deſign of this diſcourſe, I cannot help obſerving, by the way, that the preaching of the goſpel has all along met with the ſame reception from different characters, which it did formerly from Feſtus and Agrippa. With the former, many there are who charge the precepts of our religion with downright folly and madneſs. That a man ſhould tamely ſubmit to an injury without revenging it, nay, that he ſhould even return good for evil: That he ſhould forego any advantage which lies in his way, or deny himſelf any pleaſure or ſatisfaction which he might enjoy: That he ſhould in ſome caſes prefer poverty to wealth, contempt to honour, and even death to life,

appear to these men to be such unreasonable and unnatural compliances, as, they think, no man who has either sense or spirit can submit to. Others there are who, with Agrippa, entertain much more favourable sentiments, both of the doctrines and the precepts of the gospel; who will listen attentively to our instructions, and be at the same time very sensible of their errors, and very desirous to amend them, and almost persuaded to be what we would have them; but who no sooner turn their backs upon the preacher, than, with Agrippa, both his instructions and their own good resolutions are alike forgot, and they continue the same thoughtless triflers they were before. Immediately they rise up from their seats, with those that sit with them, go aside, and talk and employ their thoughts about matters very different from those, which a moment before engaged their attention.——But to proceed,

Let us in the first place see what it is that constitutes the character, which St. Paul

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in the text so earnestly wishes, and which every faithful minister of the gospel should in like manner wish, was the character of all that heard him, what it is to be almost and altogether a Christian.

And then, secondly, we shall soon be convinced, that wishing a man to be such, is wishing the greatest happiness to the man himself, and to all about him.

Now to be such a one, is, in two words, firmly to believe all that Christ has taught, and sincerely to practise all that he has commanded us. By a firm belief is meant, not only a bare assent to all the great truths of the gospel, but an embracing these truths with a devout and active faith, a faith which guides and directs our will and affections, our desires and inclinations, and penetrates and possesses our very heart and soul; a faith working by love, producing all those instances of love and obedience, which are the natural fruits of a sincere gratitude to our most gracious God and

Saviour: and by a ſincere practice is to be underſtood, not an abſolute freedom from all ſin whatſoever, even the leaſt deviation from our ſtrict duty (that being impoſſible in our preſent ſtate) but an uniform reſpect to all God's commandments, and a ſteady perſeverance in the ſeveral duties of a godly, righteous, and ſober life.

And yet we are told by ſome modern teachers, that a man may believe and practiſe all this, and be at the ſame time in no better a ſtate than a mere Heathen, if he hath not felt the Holy Ghoſt working upon, and converting his ſoul; and felt it ſo diſtinctly, that he can tell the very day and hour, when all at once Chriſt was formed in him, and the ſeal of the Spirit ſtamped upon his ſoul. But how differently do theſe men pronounce concerning the ſigns and tokens of our being in a ſtate of grace, that is real and altogether Chriſtians, from what Chriſt and his Apoſtles do! Conſult St. Paul, and he will tell you, that if you have crucified your affections and luſts,

then you may be assured that you are Christ's, and that you are led by his Spirit. Go to St. John, and he will tell you, that hereby you may know that you are of, and in God, if you keep his commandments. Do but hear what Christ himself says, *That the tree is known by its fruit, the man by his works.* And one would think it an insult to any man's understanding, to suppose he could hesitate a single moment whose determination, in a point of such consequence, he should most attend to, that of an inspired Apostle, and of his all-wise Redeemer; or that of a man, who can give no other proof of his inspiration, or of any extraordinary revelations he has received from heaven, but his own bare word and assertion. And after all, what occasion is there for any particular or extraordinary assurances of our being the children of God, and the chosen of Christ, when such a plain rule, and such easy directions are given to all men, by which they may soon be satisfied about these matters? Wherefore should any particular man desire or expect a miraculous notice, a voice

from

from heaven, to assure him of a point, which he may at any time be assured of, if he will but look into the scriptures. For they will clear up all his doubts. There he will find all that he wants to know, to make him wise unto salvation, wrote in such large and legible characters, *that he that runs may read them*; and all that he must do to inherit eternal life, contained in rules and directions expressed with so much clearness and simplicity, that he that hath ears to hear, cannot but hear and understand them.

Having thus seen what it is to be both almost, and altogether a Christian, let us in the next place proceed to shew that to be such, is both the greatest happiness to the man himself, and the greatest blessing to all around him.

Now this is evident from those essential ingredients which compose the character of the compleat Christian. For such a one *has crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

lusts. He has entirely subdued his passions to the direction and government of his reason, and has thereby secured the peace and tranquillity of his own mind. He is subject to none of those violent commotions, which too free an indulgence of his passions is apt to raise in a man. He is not liable to that slavish subjection to his lusts, which sometimes oblige a man to act the vilest, or the lowest part; the part of the profligate or the buffoon, the part of the devil or the brute; which so often, for the sake of a momentary satisfaction, makes him forfeit all the comforts of this life, and all the hopes of a better. Instead of the bondage of corruption, to which the men of this world are enslaved, he enjoys *the glorious liberty of the sons of God*; the liberty of being guided by truth and reason, the liberty of pursuing his real and greatest interest.

Again, a Christian is one who has overcome the world: Who is neither to be debauched by its pleasures, nor confounded by its terrors; Who can enjoy all the real comforts

comforts in life without abuſing them, and yet, upon the leaſt warning, can reſign them with patience and humility: So that in any given circumſtances, no man can be either more happy, or leſs miſerable.

Once more, a Chriſtian is one who, through his Lord and Saviour, hath obtained the victory over his laſt and greateſt enemy, death; and therefore inſtead of thoſe dreadful apprehenſions which others feel on the leaſt alarm of their approaching diſſolution, all the days of his appointed time he can wait with compoſure and reſignation till his great change cometh. He can reflect on it with pleaſure, and even rejoice at the ſight of it; having no perplexing doubts to diſcompoſe, no guilty fears to diſturb him. For the ſting of death is ſin. It is the conſciouſneſs of our guilt, and the dread of that vengeance of the living God, which we know we have deſerved, that arms our enemy with all his horrors, and makes even the remembrance of him bitter unto us. Now the victory which the Chriſtian hath obtain-

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ed over death, is a victory over ſin alſo. For therefore it was that Chriſt died for us, that he might deliver us both from the power and the puniſhment of our ſins. He hath reconciled us to his Father by his croſs, he hath redeemed us unto God by his blood.

But the Chriſtian hath not only made his peace with God, and therefore hath nothing to fear from his juſtice, he hath alſo the ſtrongeſt pledges of aſſurances of the particular love and favour of his Maker, and therefore has every thing to hope for from his goodneſs. He hath an intimate union with Chriſt, in that ſpiritual ſociety of which Chriſt is the head. He is even diſtinguiſhed by the endearing appellations of the friend of his Saviour, and the child of his God; and therefore all the zeal and affection which one friend can have for another, all the tenderneſs and compaſſion which the moſt indulgent parent can have for his moſt beloved child, that and infinitely more has our God and Father, our Saviour and Redeemer, for every one of his true diſciples

and

and faithful ſervants. To every one of theſe, the conſciouſneſs of the loving kindneſs of the Lord will be a continual feaſt. It will pour forth light and gladneſs upon the moſt gloomy ſcenes of mortality, and give the higheſt reliſh to all the real comforts and ſweets of life. Even in the valley of the ſhadow of death, his God ſhall be with him, ſhall ſupport and ſtrengthen him. In a word, what hath he to fear who hath the Almighty on his ſide? What may he not hope for, who hath infinite goodneſs for his friend?

And as to be a true Chriſtian is, as we have juſt now ſeen, the greateſt happineſs which can befall any man, ſo is it the greateſt bleſſing to all about him; which will eaſily be ſeen, by conſidering him in every poſſible relation he can ſtand in to others. Does he appear in the public character of a magiſtrate, or a governor? The fear of God will be ever before his eyes, and he will conſider the Lord as ſitting by him in judgment; and therefore will accept no man's

man's perſon, nor be at any time diverted by any paſſion or intereſt from executing righteouſneſs, truth, and mercy; or from doing any thing that is agreeable to the nature and end of his appointment. Is he ſet by Providence at the head of a great and mighty nation? He will look upon himſelf as the miniſter of God to his people for their good; and ſo always conſidering the commiſſion he is entruſted with, and who it was that ſent him; he would deſire and endeavour to be juſt ſuch to his ſubjects, as he would have God be to himſelf; always kind and propitious to them, always tender and careful of them; always provident for their good and welfare, in ways perhaps by them unthought of and unforeſeen, very often beyond their hopes, ſometimes exceeding their very wiſhes.

Does the Chriſtian find himſelf placed in the condition of a ſubject? Having long ſince learnt, and being thoroughly perſuaded that all magiſtracy is the ordinance of God, and that the king is his miniſter, he will

obey

obey those who have the rule over him, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. He will think himself obliged to pay his prince the next degree of that love and duty, which he owes to God himself. But as he knows full well, that this minister of God is a man of like infirmities with himself, he will not expect in him the perfection of an angel; he will therefore shew the same candour to the errors and failings of his governors, as he would desire in his own case. He will not vent his displeasure at every person and measure which offends him, in clamourous invectives, but will principally *study to be quiet, and to do his own business, chearfully obeying those which have the rule over him.* Follow now the Christian into the more private walks of life. View him in the several relations which he appears in, and with what an engaging propriety will you see him performing his assigned part! All those idle prejudices and attachments, all those perverse and malignant humours which are so apt to warp the judgments of the wisest men, all these he hath totally subdued,

or

or effectually corrected, by the help of that wisdom which he hath learned in Christ, whilst every social and benevolent affection within him rises to its utmost height. The fear of God, and the love of his Saviour, ever dwell in him, controul and regulate every purpose of his soul, and every motion of his heart; so that whilst others are hurried on by a blind, or partial affection, he proceeds upon the surest and safest principles; does not mistake appearances for realities, nor prefer trifles to substantials, things temporal to things eternal. In short, he that hath attained to such an elevation of soul as even to love his enemies, and to do good to those that hate and persecute him, cannot fail of being inspired with the most tender and affectionate sentiments for all those, who are either joined to him by the ties of nature and blood, or recommended to his regard by the united motives of duty, gratitude, and generosity.

Again, who would you sooner wish for your neighbour, your acquaintance, or your

friend, than the man of universal benevolence? than he, who, as much as in him lies, will live peaceably with all men? who, so far from doing the least injury to any man, is always disposed to do all the good he can to every man.

Lastly, Who would you rather chuse to have any dealings or concerns with, than the true Christian, whose invariable maxim it is to do unto all men, as he would they should do unto him; who would not offer the least wrong to you, though he could do it with the greatest secrecy and impunity, God and his own conscience being unto him instead of a thousand witnesses; who always means what he says, and is what he appears to be. This it is to be almost and altogether a Christian. Such is the happiness to the man himself: such the blessing to all around him.

What has here been advanced, will naturally suggest to us the two following reflections:

First,

First, If so great is the happiness of being altogether a Christian, every man who is indeed such, will know how to value it accordingly. The name of a Christian will appear to him to be much more honourable than all those high-sounding titles, which are held in so much admiration by the rest of the world; since these denote only a fading and transitory, but that an immortal crown of glory. He will ever be applauding his own good fortune, and blessing that kind providence, which so liberally furnished him with the means of grace, and so fully made known to him the paths of life and salvation. Every attempt to pervert his faith will be repelled with horror and indignation, will be looked upon as an attempt to rob him of that which is dearer to him than all the world besides; of that which is the resolution of all his doubts, the composer of all his fears, and the source of all his joy.

Secondly, Since a true Christian is such a public blessing, it follows, that all institutions

which promote and eſtabliſh true chriſtianity are of public utility; and that all who favour and encourage them, are public benefactors; ſince ſuch inſtitutions tend to leſſen the evils, and to multiply the comforts of human life. Nay, ſuch men are the beſt of patriots. For what is patriotiſm, but the love of our country? And how can we better ſhew that love, than by promoting ſuch practices and ſuch principles, as naturally tend to its peace and proſperity, and to make any people the happieſt nation under heaven?

In what other light then can we conſider ſuch places as theſe, than as the ſtrength as well as ornaments of our country, and the grand ſeminaries of the public happineſs? And what diſtinguiſhed honours ought to be paid to the memory of all thoſe great and good men, by whoſe beneficence ſuch extenſive and valuable privileges have been tranſmitted down to us through ſo many generations; and, which we truſt in God, will continue ſafe and inviolable from the

hands

hands of the rapacious and the profane, as long as any thing ſhall continue, which a wiſe and good man would wiſh to live for; as long as religion and learning, law and liberty, good ſenſe and good manners, ſhall have any intereſt, or being amongſt us.

SERMON II.

JOHN vi. 68.

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

OUR blessed Lord observing, that some of his followers, who found themselves disappointed in their worldly views, had now deserted him, addresses himself to his disciples in this affectionate question, *Will ye also go away?* To which Simon Peter, in the name of the rest, returned this highly proper and generous answer, *Lord, to whom shall we go?* As if he had said, Lord, for whom should we leave thee? What master or teacher, that can instruct us as thou dost?

Who is there that can, like thee, inform and aſſure us of a ſtate of eternal happineſs after this life, and of the way by which we may obtain it? And accordingly I propoſe from hence to ſhew, the great excellency of our holy Religion, in theſe *three* particulars:

1ſt, In clearly and fully revealing to mankind a future ſtate of eternal happineſs.

2dly, In affording us all the requiſite informations, concerning the nature of that happineſs.

And 3dly, In the plain directions it gives us, how we may qualify ourſelves for it.

1ſt, I ſay, the goſpel has clearly and fully revealed to mankind a future ſtate of eternal happineſs. And this is a point, which will ſoon be diſpatched, the Scriptures of the New Teſtament being ſo full and particular upon it. Indeed it would be endleſs to repeat all the paſſages, in which life and immortality are there aſſerted and brought

to

to light; not under the myſterious cover of types and allegories, nor by remote conſequence and ſecondary ſenſes; but plainly and directly, in the cleareſt, ſtrongeſt, and preciſeſt expreſſions; ſuch as theſe, that *whoſoever believeth in the Son of God hath everlaſting life*; that after the general reſurrection, *we ſhall die no more*, we ſhall live for ever, for *ever be with the Lord*; that *the gift of God is eternal life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.*

But, perhaps, this important truth will appear to greater advantage, and affect us much more ſenſibly, if we compare the full aſſurances which the goſpel has given us of an everlaſting ſtate of happineſs, with the obſcure and imperfect notices, which either the light of nature, or the law of Moſes affords upon the ſame point. Now all the arguments which the former of theſe furniſhes us with, are ſuch as are drawn from the nature of man, or the perfections of the Deity. Thus it is concluded from reaſon, that the ſoul, or thinking ſubſtance within

within us, muſt be of a very different nature from that matter out of which our bodies are framed; that as the latter conſiſts of an infinite number of ſeparate and diſſimilar parts, each of which is as diſtinct from the other, as the whole is from any other whole; ſo the former muſt be but one ſimple and undivided being, and conſequently is not liable to be involved in the diſſolution and deſtruction of the other; but will ſtill ſubſiſt whole and entire, whilſt the body is mouldering into the ſame duſt, out of which it was at firſt taken; and, unleſs God puts an end to its exiſtence by a ſpecial act of his almighty power, will for ever ſo ſubſiſt. But granting the whole of this argument, what does it prove? Nothing more than the bare permanency of the human ſoul, or its continuing to exiſt, (and ſo it will equally prove the permanency of the ſouls of brutes) whilſt it concludes nothing at all about the condition and happineſs of our future being. Beſides, how can we be ſure that God will never, by virtue of his all-mighty power, reduce the

ſoul

ſoul into the ſame nothing, out of which he firſt brought it into being? Can it be ſhewn to contradict any of his attributes, to ſuppoſe he had fixed a period, though a more diſtant one, to the exiſtence of our ſouls, as well as to that of our bodies? Or is it impoſſible for him, to create any thinking, rational beings, but ſuch as are immortal, and the images of his own eternity.

So again, men by conſidering themſelves as free and accountable creatures, and God as an infinitely holy, juſt, and good being, may very reaſonably conclude from the preſent unequal diſtribution of happineſs and miſery, that they ſhall live in another ſtate of being, in which all things will be ſet to rights, and ample amends made to the righteous for all their ſufferings here. But then how does it follow, that this ſtate will never have an end? Will nothing leſs than the grant of everlaſting happineſs, be ſufficient to clear the divine perfections, and fully anſwer the very ſlender deſerts and imperfect ſervices of his creatures?

Or,

Or, can the ſufferings of a few years, be only compenſated by the joys of eternity? In a word, a ſtate of eternal rewards, is what, without revelation, we could have no ſolid reaſons to believe; and what, without an expreſs promiſe from God, we could never with any modeſty expect.

Proceed we now to enquire, what are the notices which the law of Moſes affords of eternal life and happineſs. And here we muſt confeſs, if we believe St. Paul, that the patriarchs, and other holy men of old, were fully perſuaded of a future and more bleſſed ſtate; for they declared plainly, that they were *only ſtrangers and pilgrims upon earth*, and *therefore that they ſought after another country, even a heavenly one*. But then, this faith of theirs muſt have been founded, either on the natural notions they had of God's juſtice and goodneſs; or on a ſecondary and ſpiritual ſenſe, which they put upon ſome general promiſes and expreſſions in the ſacred writings; or, laſtly, upon ſome particular revelations God had been

pleaſed

pleaſed to make to them; I ſay, the belief of an eternal ſtate of happineſs under the Moſaic diſpenſation, muſt have been built upon ſome of theſe foundations, and not upon any expreſs mention, or direct promiſe of ſuch a ſtate; ſince there is not in all his writings (whatever there may be in thoſe of the later prophets) a ſingle paſſage in which eternal life, (*eternal*, I ſay,) is expreſsly mentioned. If there had been ſuch a paſſage, I ſuppoſe it would have been found out, and produced long before this time. And if eternal life is not clearly and directly revealed in the law of Moſes, it is abſurd to ſuppoſe it a ſanction of that law. For all ſanctions muſt be delivered with the greateſt ſimplicity and preciſion, elſe they can never anſwer the end and deſign of the legiſlator; and an implied and conſequential ſanction, is what was never before heard of. But for a more direct proof that eternal life was no ſanction of the law of Moſes, I ſhall only refer any man who denies this, to the xxviiith chapter of Deuteronomy, which is a ſort of epilogue to that body of laws, which

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is contained in the preceding chapters; and in which he particularly enumerates the bleſſings and curſes which would attend the obſervance or neglect of them; where therefore, if any where, one would expect to meet with ſome promiſe, or aſſurance of a future retribution; and yet we find nothing but riches and plenty, health and long life, a numerous and flouriſhing family, promiſed to the obedient; and nothing but poverty, ſickneſs, captivity, violent and untimely death, both of the offender and his offspring, threatened to the diſobedient. And, indeed, were it otherwiſe, how could the goſpel have been ſaid by the apoſtle to be founded on better promiſes than the law, if the promiſes of both were the ſame? Or how could life and immortality be brought to light by Chriſt, if Moſes had clearly revealed them before? Or laſtly how could St. Peter have made this the reaſon of his adhering to Chriſt, that he had the words of eternal life, if the ſame eternal life had been taught, or promiſed him by the law of Moſes?

But

But 2dly, The Chriſtian religion has not only clearly revealed a future ſtate of eternal happineſs, it has alſo afforded us all the requiſite informations concerning the nature of that happineſs. For from the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament we learn, that this happineſs will be partly of a privative, and partly of a poſitive nature. The former is expreſſed in all thoſe paſſages in which it is ſaid, that we ſhall reſt from our labours; that there ſhall be no more death, nor pain, nor ſorrow; and that all tears ſhall be wiped from our eyes. The full meaning of all which is, that we ſhall be entirely delivered from all the miſeries and troubles of this vain life. We ſhall be no longer ſubject to thoſe numberleſs pains and diſeaſes, which do now ſo afflict and torment us: even death ſhall be ſo ſwallowed up in victory, that the very fear of it ſhall be no more; and conſequently, we ſhall never again feel thoſe heart-breaking ſorrows for the loſs of our deareſt friends and relations, the deſire of our eyes, and to whom our ſoul cleaved. We ſhall be freed from all that care and ſolicitude, all that toil

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and labour, which are neceſſary to our paſſing through the world with any tolerable comfort. Our patience and meekneſs will meet with none of thoſe hard trials they are now put to, by the unworthy treatment we meet with from baſe and diſingenuous men. There (in heaven, I mean) are no hypocrites, cheats, nor traitors; not ſo much as one hard-hearted, falſe, or ungrateful wretch to be met with. But, what is beyond all, we ſhall be delivered from our own follies and infirmities, from our own treacherous hearts, from all temptation to evil. The great enemy of our ſouls ſhall not be able to *do us any violence, neither ſhall the ſon of wickedneſs come near to hurt us.*

And this is one part of our future happineſs, that *no harm can happen to us, nor any ſort of plague come near our dwelling.* The other and poſitive part is expreſſed under ſuch characters, as muſt neceſſarily raiſe our ideas and expectations of it, to the utmoſt pitch. It is ſaid *to be a treaſure, which neither ruſt nor moth doth corrupt,*

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and which no thieves can break through and steal. It is called an *inheritance with the saints in light, a crown of glory, and a kingdom.* For as all these things are in the highest esteem amongst men, so, by their being made use of to represent to us our future glory and blessedness, we are given to understand, that the glory will far exceed all the choicest enjoyments of this present world, all the honours and advantages which men do so eagerly covet after here below. These figurative expressions, I say, are used to denote in general the exceeding greatness of our future rewards, and not the particular precise nature of them, since that is impossible in our present state, for want of the proper faculties to apprehend them. No—Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for those that love him.—But besides these general and figurative descriptions, which the scriptures have been pleased to give us of our happiness in heaven, they have likewise indulged us with a nearer and

more diſtinct view of ſome particulars, and thereby afforded us ſome bright glimpſes of that glory that ſhall afterwards be more fully revealed. Thus we are aſſured, that we ſhall be made as, or equal to the angels, *i. e.* as immortal, as wiſe and holy, and in every other reſpect, as happy as they are: we are told, that Chriſt ſhall *change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body*, reſembling that in its beauty and ſplendor, its ſpiritual and incorruptible nature. Nay, we ſhall ſee God, we ſhall ſee him as he is, and be made like unto him. We ſhall dwell in his immediate preſence, and rejoice in the light of his countenance. We ſhall partake of thoſe abundant manifeſtations he will there make of all himſelf, and ſee his glorious perfections diſplayed in their brighteſt luſtre. We ourſelves ſhall go on from ſtrength to ſtrength, ſhall be continually growing wiſer and better, more and more reſembling God in every thing that is truly great and good. But what crowns all this happineſs is, (as has been already ſhewn) that it will be eternal. Let our enjoyments here on earth be ever ſo

great,

great, ſtill there is a thought, which will be every now and then caſting a damp upon them, and make the heart ſad even in the midſt of joy, that we cannot be ſecure of any of them for a ſingle moment; and that that day, at fartheſt, cannot be very far off, when we ſhall certainly be deprived of them, and go out of the world as naked as we came into it: but when we are once admitted into the manſions of the bleſſed, our happineſs will be continually heightened by the tranſporting reflection, that it can never, no never, have an end.

Thus far the Holy Scriptures have thought fit to inform us, concerning our future happineſs: but as for any further particulars, as how, and in what ſort of employment we ſhall paſs our time, and ſpend eternity, they have not been pleaſed to acquaint us with; and therefore, it is a needleſs and unbecoming curioſity in us, to be over-ſolicitous about ſuch matters: it is enough for us to be aſſured, that God hath promiſed to make us compleatly happy, for he both

knows how, and hath sufficient power to make us so; and what he hath promised, he will certainly perform.

Proceed we now thirdly, To shew the great excellency of the Christian religion, in the plain directions it gives us, how we may qualify ourselves for eternal happiness. The necessary qualifications for eternal happiness required of us by the gospel, are faith and good works. He that *believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved:* And, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.* Not either of these separately, but both of them together. For as without faith *it is impossible to please God,* so *without holiness no man can see the Lord.* And they are the words of our blessed Saviour, *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* And as by the faith in Christ, which is required of us, is not meant a mere historical faith, or a bare believing that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, and that he really did perform all

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the mighty works which are recorded of him; nay, that he also came from God, died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, but a faith that dwells in the heart, as well as in the understanding; a faith that worketh by love, filling us with all due gratitude to God, with a pure zeal for his honour, and a firm trust in all his promises: So on the other hand, the holiness which is expected from us, is not a perfect, sinless obedience, but a hearty sorrow for our sins, a thorough forsaking them, and such advances towards perfection, as the present infirmity of our natures will permit. These are terms of salvation, which all men may comply with, who will but sincerely endeavour to do so; for then they may depend upon the assistance of the Holy Spirit, *whose grace will be sufficient for us*, and whose strength will be made perfect in our weakness.

And now were the same question put to us, which our Lord put to his twelve apostles, Will ye also go away? will ye forsake me and my religion? Might we not

anſwer him with the affectionate zeal of St. Peter, *Lord, to whom ſhall we go?* Shall we exchange our Chriſtianity for the religion of nature? Shall we give up ourſelves to the ſole direction of that guide, which the beſt and wiſeſt men in the heathen world have complained of, as unable to carry them through the whole compaſs of their duty? Or ſhall we reject the clear and full aſſurances which the goſpel affords of a glorious immortalily, and take up with the ſlender hopes our unaſſiſted reaſon ſuggeſts of ſome happier ſtate to come, we know not what? But will this way of acting be agreeable to that reaſon we pretend to follow, to prefer darkneſs to light, doubts and uncertainty to conviction and aſſurance? Shall we go then to the law of Moſes, and look for no other rewards of our obedience, than thoſe on which that law is founded? That is, in other words, ſhall we embrace the ſhadow inſtead of the ſubſtance, a temporary happineſs inſtead of an eternal one? Lord, to whom ſhould we go, but unto thee?

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ſince it is thou, and thou only, which haſt the words of eternal life. With this zeal and gratitude ſhould the breaſt of every chriſtian be affected. That we are not ſo, is owing to that reproachful foible of our nature, by which we are apt to ſlight and overlook the greateſt bleſſings, for that very reaſon which ought to make us prize them the moſt, viz, that we have never known the want of them. Thus it is, that thoſe who have never languiſhed on a bed of ſickneſs, groaned under pain, nor felt the diſtreſſes of want and poverty, are moſt ſtupidly inſenſible of the thanks they owe to their great Benefactor, for the continued enjoyment of health, eaſe and plenty. And thus it is with regard to the choiceſt bleſſings of nature and providence. Though the ſun goeth from the uttermoſt part of heaven, and runneth about unto the end of it again, and nothing is hid from the heat thereof; though the former and the latter rain cometh down in its ſeaſon, and the clouds drop fatneſs; though heaven and earth conſpire to ſupply our

wants, and to adminiſter to our delight, yet do all theſe benefits, by the conſtant return of them, grow cheap unto us, and we wantonly abuſe them, without ever reflecting on the value of the gifts, or the kindneſs of our Benefactor. And thus alſo it is with the bleſſings of grace, and the mercies of our redemption; which, by our long and eaſy acquaintance with them, have grown familiar to our minds, and are ſeldom able to warm us with any of thoſe grateful ſentiments, which ſuch ineſtimable favours moſt juſtly demand of us. But would we only imagine ourſelves in the circumſtances of a ſober, ſerious, and thinking heathen, how greatly ſhould we applaud our own good fortune! how ſincerely adore that kind Providence, which has placed us in the light of the goſpel, and opened to us the proſpect of a glorious immortality? How would it have tranſported a wiſe and good man in the Pagan world, *a Socrates for inſtance*, to have the aſſiſtance of that guide offered to him, the want of which he ſo much felt and

complained

complained of; to have ſuch a ſyſtem of morality revealed unto him, which his own improved reaſon was too weak to diſcover, but when revealed, would oblige him to approve; to have all his fears and anxieties about the divine juſtice, ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of having, in many inſtances, tranſgreſſed his duty, quieted and removed by the gracious tender of mercy, made unto man through Chriſt; but above all, to be aſſured, that his ſincere, though imperfect endeavours to ſerve and pleaſe God, would be rewarded with an eternal weight of glory. Much more tranſporting would be the pleaſure he would feel from ſuch joyful tidings, than the arrival of an unlooked-for pardon would give to a condemned criminal, or the ſudden return of health and eaſe to the wretch who was juſt expiring under the extremity of ſickneſs, pain, and torture. Behold, O Chriſtians! we are the pardoned criminal; we are the ſick, that have been made whole; we were dying, and behold in Chriſt we live, yea, ſhall live for ever.

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Let us learn then how to value, as we ought, our own great happineſs. Let us for ever glory in that worthy name, by which we are called, and count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.

SERMON

SERMON III.

ECCLES. ii. 2.

I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doth it?

IT is hard to say, which of the two is more prejudicial to the true interest of religion, the endeavouring to suit it to every man's taste, by dissembling its difficulties, by softening and palliating the rules it prescribes us, and making it speak *smooth things*; or on the other hand, the representing it as a morose and gloomy institution, which damps and extinguishes every effusion of social chearfulness, and the best good sense, and the best good nature. The former tends to lead the souls of men into a most pernicious

pernicious error, by making them think, they may at the ſame time ſerve two ſuch different maſters as God and mammon; the latter, effectually to deter them from that religion we would perſuade them to embrace. The one would crowd our churches with thoſe who had only a form of godlineſs, and the bare name of Chriſtians, the other would ſoon make them quite empty. We cannot therefore imagine, that the wiſe preacher, who was ſo hearty a friend to all virtue and godlineſs, would ſo far forget himſelf, as to pronounce of all laughter, that it is mad, and to aſk of all mirth, what doth it? Let our laughter be ever ſo moderate, or the occaſion of our mirth ever ſo innocent. Why then, will it be ſaid, did nature teach us ſuch an outward expreſſion of the inward joy of our hearts? Wherefore did it plant in us that ſtrong propenſity, which ſome men have at all times, and all men except a few unhappy wretches, feel ſometimes, to the pleaſures of converſation, to mirth and cheerfulneſs? Or were theſe diſpoſitions given us, only that we might

have

have the trouble of getting rid of them? Much more justly may we conclude, that when God demands any worship from us, the worship he expects must be that of men, and not of angels; and that the design of any religion which comes from him must be, to reform and restrain, and not to extirpate any of those passions and affections which he himself has given us: nay, so far is an innocent chearfulness from being inconsistent with the practice of religion, that it is the natural consequence of it. The consciousness of having done our duty, and thereby gained the favour of the greatest and best of Beings, will make our hearts *dance for joy*; will be make us pleased with ourselves, and habitually inclined to please others also.

It being so plain that Solomon does not intend, in my text, to condemn all mirth, be it ever so moderate, or ever so innocent, I shall endeavour to shew how far this his *aphorism* extends, and in what cases it may be

be ſaid of laughter that it is mad, and of mirth, what doth it?

And firſt, it may moſt juſtly be applied, and was principally intended to be ſo applied (as appears from the context) to a life that is wholly dedicated to pleaſure and ſenſuality. For this is in effect, to abjure our humanity, and to degrade ourſelves to a level with the meaneſt reptile; and what an idle piece of grimace is it! to talk of the great dignity of our natures, and our ſuperiority over the beaſts which periſh, when the buſineſs of their lives and of ours is the very ſame; only with this difference, that they act much more agreeable to their natures, than we do to ours. For they have no other principle to direct them but ſenſe and appetite; whereas man, who was deſigned by his Creator for much nobler purpoſes, has faculties of a more exalted nature, which have a claim to our firſt and greateſt regard, and which were intended to guide and govern, and not to follow, and be enſlaved to the lower appetites and paſſions.

May

May we not ask too of such a life as this, what doth it? Doth it after all deductions produce any real happiness? So far from that, it destroys our fortunes, health, and reputations; it cuts us off in the flower of our days, or else makes us a burden to ourselves, by loading us with contempt and infamy, with pain and poverty.

Secondly, Another case in which it may be said of laughter it is mad, and of mirth, what doth it? is when we employ our mirth only to expose and ridicule other men, whatever in them is the subject of our laughter, whether it is their vices and follies, or their virtues and good qualities.

It must be confessed, that if there is any thing in others that can be a fit subject for our ridicule, and in which we are most likely to meet with success, it must be their vices.

The man, who would perhaps be unaffected with a serious reproof, might be brought by a candid representation to see his

follies

follies, to despise and forsake them. For there are many to be found, who have such a strong pride of appearing as wise and as discreet as their neighbours, that they had much rather be ranked under any class, than that of fools and madmen; and be thought to want any thing, rather than prudence and judgment. The most likely way therefore to reform such as these, is by some well-turned raillery to set their failings before them in such a light, as must convince them they possess none of those good qualities, the want of which they are so loth to be suspected of. But then, he who would employ these weapons of banter and ridicule with success, in attacking the faults of others, must be a perfect master of his art. The strokes he gives must be those of a friend, not of an enemy, directed by discretion, and laid on with good-nature, levelled not at the man, but at his vices. For if the sinner once perceives, that you design not his reformation, but only to make him look mean and contemptible in the eyes of others, he will forget the subject of thy mirth, and be

wholly

wholly taken up with reflecting on thy malice and good-nature. He will ſtill continue in his ſins, and curſe thee in the bitterneſs of his ſoul. And now, what doth this laughter of thine? It has made thy brother thine enemy, without making him any more a friend to virtue.

But if it is ſo ſeldom right to laugh at men even for their follies and vices, becauſe it is ſo difficult to ſucceed in laughing them out of them, and unleſs we do ſo, we ſhall only confirm them the more in both; ſurely, we may always, with the greateſt reaſon, pronounce of that laughter, that it is mad, which has no other aim, than to expoſe the virtues and real good qualities of other men. Since to make theſe the ſubject of our ridicule argues the moſt extravagant folly, or the greateſt naughtineſs of heart in thoſe who can be guilty of ſuch a practice. For what can be more abſurd, than to endeavour to make a man contemptible, for poſſeſſing what is the greateſt glory of his nature,—what ſhould recommend him to the eſteem

and friendſhip of every rational creature, and what the ſcoffer himſelf, if he has any remains of ſhame in him, would not be thought to be without? Or can any thing be a greater ſign of the worſt ſort of ill-nature, of the moſt diabolical malice, than to ſet ourſelves to put virtue out of countenance—to laugh every thing that is good and praiſe-worthy out of the world, and to make men be aſhamed of any of thoſe good qualities, which will make them moſt happy in themſelves, and a bleſſing to all around them?

But the folly and wickedneſs of ridiculing men for any real good qualities is ſo very evident, that I ſhall ſay no more about it, but paſs on to conſider another caſe, to which the *maxim* in my text may moſt juſtly be applied, the making religion, or any thing ſacred, the ſubject of our ridicule. And I ſhall dwell the longer on expoſing this practice, as it is of ſuch dangerous conſequence, and as it has of late years ſo generally prevailed, to the great grief of all ſober and ſerious men. Now they who make any religious

matters

matters the ſubjects of their mirth and banter, either do believe there is ſome truth in the things they ridicule, or they do not. If they do not, but look upon all religion as the invention of prieſts and politicians, yet ſtill muſt they be charged with the greateſt ill-manners and ill-nature. For if it be the principal part, if not the whole of what is called good-breeding, to give no offence nor uneaſineſs to thoſe with whom we converſe; if it be rude and ill-mannered to throw out any thing in our diſcourſe, as may raiſe a bluſh in the face of any one who hears us, it muſt certainly be ſo in the higheſt degree, it muſt be downright impudence to give our tongues ſuch liberties, as will affront and ſcandalize, if not the greateſt part of every company we converſe with, yet by far the greateſt part of mankind. Now to chooſe ſuch topics as God and Religion for our mirth and ridicule, is to put the higheſt affront upon the greateſt part of the world; ſince, bad as it is grown, the greateſt part (thank God) do ſtill preſerve, in their converſation and outward behaviour, an awful reverence for theſe

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things, however in their lives and practice they disregard them, and are greatly shocked at any insult which are offered them. And yet the men who can be thus impiously witty, are often such as value themselves much upon account of their politeness and good-breeding, who would not for all the world say a rude thing to any man; whilst they make no scruple of calling far the greatest part of mankind fools and madmen, for paying that regard to all religious matters, which they think due to them.

But this practice of ridiculing religion is not only chargeable with ill manners, but with a most spiteful malice and ill-nature; since it tends to laugh men out of those notions, which, of all others, afford them the greatest comfort and satisfaction. The firm belief of a God, infinitely holy, just, and good; of a kind and all-mighty providence, which continually watches over all his works; of our redemption from sin by a Saviour, and of a life everlasting, gives men that peace and complacency, which this world can neither

give,

give, nor take away from them, as ſoftens all the calamities of life, and makes even death itſelf deſirable. Suppoſing then that theſe notions men have got, are only idle dreams, and that we are really perſuaded they are ſo, yet it can be nothing but pure ill-nature in us to endeavour to laugh them out of ſo delightful an error, to convince them of which would be to make them miſerable; an error, which ſo ſtrongly incites them to every ſocial virtue, without which, they would neither be faithful to their truſts, grateful to their benefactors, or friends to their country. Suppoſing then for once, that theſe ſcoffers are the only perſons who have their eyes and their wits about them, that they only ſee through the cheat, which deludes the reſt of the world, yet ſtill are they chargeable with the greateſt rudeneſs and ill-nature, in this attack they make upon the underſtandings and happineſs of far the greater part of mankind. But if on the other hand we ſuppoſe there is ſome truth in thoſe things, which theſe men would ridicule, and that they themſelves believe

ſo too, as is generally the caſe, ſurely we may pronounce of their laughter (if of any) that it is mad, mad beyond all compariſon. Even the devils believe and tremble; whereas a ſcoffer of this ſort believes, as well as they, that there is a God that made him, that this God will one day call him to account for every idle word he hath ſpoke; and that he has no hopes of pardon and mercy, but in the merits and interceſſion of a Saviour: all this he believes, and yet is not afraid to make a jeſt of his God, and mock at his Saviour. And conſidereſt thou, O man, thou that art a worm, the creature of yeſterday, who it is thou haſt blaſphemed and reviled? And againſt whom thou haſt lift up thy voice with laughter? Even againſt the Holy One of Iſrael, againſt the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity. What ſhame and confuſion of face muſt cover thee, when thou beholdeſt that Jeſus whom thou now ſcoffeſt at, coming in the clouds of heaven, in the glory of his Father, and with all his holy angels, to ſummon thee and all mankind before him? How wilt

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thou curſe thy wretched folly, when for the ſake of the idle mirth of a few hours, thou ſhalt hear thyſelf doomed to everlaſting ſhame and miſery?

What has been here ſaid againſt the ridiculing of God, and religion in general, may be applied to all things and perſons of a religious nature, viz. that thoſe men who can make theſe the ſubject of their wit and banter, are chargeable with the ſame rudeneſs and ill nature, though they do not think there is any thing in theſe matters themſelves; and with the ſame ſhocking impiety, if they do. For as he who ſweareth by the temple, ſweareth by it, and by Him that dwelleth therein; or as he that ſweareth by heaven, ſweareth by the throne of God, and Him that ſitteth thereon; ſo likewiſe may it moſt truly be ſaid, that he who takes the liberty to ſcoff at any holy things or perſons, as ſuch, ſcoffs not ſo much at them, as at that God to whom they belong. There is ſuch an awful regard due to every thing that bears any relation to the great

God of heaven and earth, as ſhould reſtrain all levity of carriage and expreſſion; as ſhould make men ſerious, if ever they are ſo, whenever ſuch matters come before them. The having recourſe therefore to ridicule and burleſque in religious controverſies, in order to expoſe the opinions of an adverſary, cannot be looked upon as a practice entirely innocent, or ſtrictly juſtifiable; and if any of our admired writers have ſometimes fallen into this way, we ſhould look upon it rather as a blemiſh, than a perfection in their compoſitions, occaſioned by the natural gaiety of their imaginations joined with too great a contempt of their antagoniſts.

It has however been advanced, by a noble author *, whoſe pen we could have wiſhed had been engaged in a better cauſe, that ridicule is the proper teſt of all truth—That a ſubject which will not bear raillery is ſuſpicious—That truth will bear all lights

* Lord Shafteſbury.

—That

—That true religion can never ſuffer by this method, though impoſture may, becauſe ridicule, if it be wrong placed, will recoil upon itſelf, and be its own corrector in the end, and ſo may without any harm be freely left to take its own courſe. The falſhood of which aſſertions is very evident. For the maintainers of them muſt own, that upon ſome ſubjects, and ſome occaſions, the uſe of ridicule is highly improper; or would they have the councils of our princes, the debates of our ſenates, and the decrees and deciſions of our courts of juſtice carried on and regulated by raillery and burleſque? But of what moment are the councils of princes, the debates of ſenates, and the decrees of a human court, when compared with the concerns of religion? If then ridicule would be improper in the former caſe, it would be monſtrous in this; ten thouſand times more ſo, than it would be for a criminal, when he is anſwering for his life, to employ himſelf all the while in ridiculing his judge and jeſting upon his accuſers, inſtead

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of defending himſelf by ſolid arguments and ſound reaſoning. Nay, ſo far is ridicule from being the proper teſt of all truths, that it is the proper teſt of no truth whatſoever; and that for this plain reaſon, that this ſort of argument will conclude equally ſtrong on both ſides the queſtion; that it will ſerve as well to impoſe upon men ſenſe and nonſenſe, the moſt glaring truths, or the moſt arrant falſhoods. Is there any perſon or character in the world ſo ſacred, ſo deſerving the reſpect of all men, but what may be rendered contemptible, when dreſſed up and brought upon the ſtage with all the proper decorations of wit and buffoonery? Is there any compoſition ſo excellent, that can ſtand the teſt of a well-turned raillery? Nay, have not the beſt performances of antients and moderns been actually burleſqued and ridiculed? But then they tell us that ridicule, when it is ſo ill placed, will recoil upon itſelf, and will ſerve only to make the truth ſhine out afterwards with greater beauty and luſtre. And granting that ridicule would always

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have that effect, how will this juſtify the uſe of it? May not all the groſſeſt methods of ſuppreſſing truth be defended by the ſame argument? Will it not follow from hence, that it is not only an innocent thing, but highly proper too, to blacken a man's reputation with lyes and ſlanders; to endanger his life with falſe accuſations, becauſe ſuch attempts will ſerve to make his innocence and integrity appear the brighter afterwards. But may we not aſk too, Who are the perſons with whom ridicule, when thus employed, will have this good effect? Not with the thinking and rational part of mankind, for with them truth needs no ſuch recommendations; they receive it upon the principles of ſound and ſober reaſon, and to ſee it ridiculed will neither leſſen, nor increaſe their affection for it, though it may raiſe a generous indignation in their breaſts to ſee the moſt important truths treated in ſo rude and unbecoming a manner. But what ſhall we ſay of the bulk of mankind, of the weak and unwary? Will truth appear

more

more lovely in their eyes? Will it be more heartily embraced by them, becauſe it is burleſqued and ridiculed? Or rather, is not this the moſt likely way of hardening them againſt the cleareſt truths, and of impoſing upon them any errors though ever ſo groſs and pernicious? Moſt aſſuredly, for all men can laugh, whilſt very few can reaſon. All men are capable of being affected with wit and humour, though but few can take the force of an argument; ſince in the former caſe a man had only need have his ears open, and the ridiculous image immediately enters and ſiezes upon the mind. Whereas in the latter, it will coſt a man ſome pains; he muſt reflect upon the thoughts which are ſuggeſted to him by another, muſt compare them together, and ſee their connexion, before he can feel the ſtrength of the argument which is laid before him: and of thoſe few who can reaſon, there are ſtill fewer who are willing to be at the pains which ſuch an exerciſe of the mind requires; who are not much more diſpoſed to have

their

their imaginations entertained with witty and humorous representations of things, than their understandings informed by sound and serious reasoning; so that the use of ridicule in all matters of controversy, is much more likely to propagate error in the world than truth. In short, it can be of no service to men of sense, and may do an infinite deal of mischief to all who are not so. With the greatest reason then may we say of this laughter, that it is mad; and of this sort of mirth, what doth it?

Thus have I endeavoured to set out the just extent of the maxim in my text; and from what has been said, it appears, that if we would have our mirth and laughter exempt from the wise man's censure, we must keep them within the bounds which God and reason have set them. Our laughter or raillery must never be employed to grieve the soul of any man, by exposing him to the scorn and contempt of others; so that we must not laugh at men even for their vices,

unless

unleſs a ſincere deſire of reforming them be our only motive, and there is good grounds to hope for ſucceſs; much leſs muſt we endeavour to render them ridiculous, for their virtues and good qualities. For this is, as was before ſhewn, both a very weak and a very wicked attempt; and is only exceeded by that ſhocking impiety as well as inſolent breach of good manners and good nature, the ridiculing of God and religion, two things which demand our higheſt regard and veneration.

I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe, with recommending to your imitation, what is recorded of that great and good man, Mr. Boyle; that he had ſuch a profound veneration for the Divine Majeſty, that for many years together he was never obſerved to mention the name of God, upon any occaſion, without a pauſe in his diſcourſe, and a viſible alteration in his countenance. For ſuch an habitual ſenſe of God upon our minds, would be our beſt guard againſt

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all approaches to the vice I have mentioned. We could not allow ourſelves any levity of carriage or expreſſion, whenever He, or any thing relating to Him, was the ſubject of our ſpeculations or debates; nay, it would be a great preſervative from all ſin and wickedneſs. We ſhould not dare to do any thing that might offend him, whoſe favour is better than life, and every thing elſe we can wiſh for; and death itſelf, with all the evils we can imagine, not half ſo terrible as his diſpleaſure.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

JAMES i. 14.

Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

THE disputes about the freedom of man's will, are a striking instance of the vain attempts of sophistry and infidelity to perplex a self-evident truth, and to silence the dictates of common sense. The subtleties employed upon this occasion, may at first confound a plain man, who is a stranger to such metaphysical jargon; but then a single reflection upon what passes within him, will put ten thousand of these subtleties to flight. Every act of our will—every thought and purpose of our minds—

every motion of our bodies—the beginning, continuance, and ceasing of every action, do, all of them, give the lye to every assertion of the necessity of our natures; and an attempt to prove I have no liberty, must appear as ridiculous and impertinent, as one to prove that I do not exist. For I am just as certain of the one, as I am of the other; and who can believe that to be true, which he knows and feels to be false? If there can be such a man, it is plain, that whatever be the case of others, he cannot be a free agent, but must be under some infatuation which overpowers both his reason and his senses. Liberty is an entire freedom from all external coaction, and a power inherent in the mind to do, or forbear any act, which soever it shall chuse and prefer. Accordingly it is declared in the text, that the nature and essence of sin, consists entirely in the free choice of a man's will; and that his guilt is always just so much in proportion, as his choice deviates from the dictates of his reason and conscience. *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and*

enticed.

enticed. The freedom of the will must therefore appear as a ſelf-evident truth to every chriſtan, nay to every man that thinks and reflects at all; but may be further enforced, by conſidering the abſurdities which follow from the contrary ſuppoſition.

For, firſt, it follows, that there is an end of all religion and morality, and that virtue and vice are words which have no meaning. For what merit or demerit can there be in a creature which has no choice of its own, but is only acted upon by an external force which it cannot reſiſt. You may as well talk of the religion of a log of wood, and of the virtue or vice of a clod of earth. The ſyſtem of rewards and puniſhments is, upon the ſame ſuppoſition, a mere farce. For how can the former be beſtowed where there is no deſert, or the latter inflicted where there is no guilt. The aſſaſſin has no more to anſwer for than the ſword, or any other inſtrument he employs; and the charitable man no more merit, than the bread or money with which he relieves the diſtreſſ-

ed. In this caſe all expoſtulations with ſinners—all exhortations to repentance and amendment of life—all invitations and encouragements to religion and virtue—in a word, all laws and injunctions, human and divine, are downright nonſenſe. For what can be more ſo, than to attempt to perſuade, or to give rules and directions to him, who can neither chuſe nor act of himſelf, but muſt either do the thing you would have him do, whether you apply to him or not, or muſt infallibly do it in ſpite of all your applications. Laſtly, what an idle part do theſe advocates for neceſſity act, who offer arguments againſt the freedom of the will to thoſe, whom they look upon as mere puppets and machines, entirely deſtitute of all liberty. As well might they pretend to reaſon with a poſt, or diſpute with a block, ſince according to them, man is no better, the ſame dull lump of inactive matter. For where we have no choice of our own, but are neceſſarily moved and directed by ſomething foreign and external to us, we are as deſtitute of all free agency, as

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the moſt inanimate parts of the creation. It is therefore ſaid in the text, that every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own (not another's) luſt, by ſome irregular appetite, or deſire, which is as much, and as properly his own, as his mind itſelf is. But here the ſenſualiſt will tell us, that the violence of theſe appetites is ſo great, there is no reſiſting them, and conſequently we are under the ſame neceſſity, as if we were acted upon by an external force. But they who make this plea, do thereby own themſelves to be of the ſame rank and nature with the brute beaſts. For to be guided ſolely by our paſſions, is to act as they do, who have nothing elſe to guide them: whereas God hath made man in his own image, hath given him reaſon, and judgment, and conſcience, to direct and controul his ſenſual appetites; and hath greatly added to the natural force of all theſe, by the revelation he hath made of himſelf to all mankind; in which he hath promiſed to aſſiſt us with his grace in this combat with our paſſions, and amply to reward our re-

ſolution and ſtedfaſtneſs. If indeed ſuch was the violence of our paſſions, that let us do what we could, let us exert all the powers of our reaſon, and call in all the ſuccours of our religion, ſtill we muſt give way to them, there would then be ſome foundation for this plea of ſinners. But this is a falſe repreſentation of the caſe, and I may appeal to every individual ſinner, whether his own heart does not tell him, that all pretences of the impoſſibility of reſiſting his luſt, are falſe and groundleſs. For I aſk him, whether, even when his paſſions are in the higheſt ferment, he not only could, but would *ſuppreſs* them, out of regard to the preſence of any perſon whom he feared or reſpected? Whether there are not many actions he would never have done, had only an idiot, or a child been preſent to obſerve them? So evident is it, that whenever a man is drawn away of his own luſt, and enticed, there is at the ſame time a power within him to reſiſt and overcome his paſſions; and that when he complies with their ſuggeſtions,

tions, it is with the full and free consent of his own mind.

The doctrine in general of the freedom of the will being thus established, a man of the plainest understanding, will not be liable to be perverted by any of those metaphysical arguments which have been brought against it. He will conclude, that there must be a fallacy in them, which through his inexperience in such *reasonings* he cannot discover, and will never be prevailed on to resign his reason and common sense to a scholastic subtlety. Thus, *e. gr.* when he is told that human liberty is inconsistent with the foreknowledge of God, and that if he maintains the one, he must give up the other; though he is unable clearly and fully to make out their consistency, he will however be convinced, that they certainly must be *consistent*; and that as all ignorance of the actions of his creatures, particularly his not knowing one moment what they will do the next, is no less contrary to infinite perfection, than all compulsion is to the nature of man; God

must in ſuch a manner foreſee the actions of men, as not to deſtroy their liberty; and men muſt be ſo far free, as not to exclude his fore-knowledge. A ſort of reaſoning which we make uſe of in a thouſand other caſes, where we are certain of the fact itſelf, but unable to comprehend the manner in which it is brought about and effected. If any one, whoſe leiſure and ſtudies qualify him to be a judge of ſuch matters, is deſirous of ſeeing a particular confutation of this, and all the other objections to human liberty, he may receive full ſatisfaction, by having recourſe to the writings of ſeveral eminent authors on the ſubject; more particularly to thoſe of the incomparable Dr. Clark, who was ſingularly happy in his being able to treat the moſt abſtruſe and abſtracted ſubjects, with the greateſt preciſion and perſpicuity; and who, in his controverſy with Leibnitz and other advocates for fate and neceſſity, has laid open the ſophiſtry and futility of all their arguments by a chain of the cleareſt and ſoundeſt reaſoning.

Beſides

Besides the direct attacks which have been made upon the doctrine I have been supporting, two *opinions* have been maintained, which by *plain* consequence entirely *overturn* it; the one by some pretended philosophers, the other by some mistaken Christians. The former assert the materiality of the soul, which effectually *destroys* all possibility of freedom. For what is incapable of thought, must be so of liberty too; liberty being only a mode of thinking. And that all matter, however modified or compounded, is incapable of being endued with a power of thinking, is a point which has been as clearly and as fully demonstrated, as any one proposition in the mathematics. I hope I shall be excused, if I lay before you a short sketch of the reasonings upon this subject, which are *drawn* from two known and confessedly essential properties of matter; its invariable resistance to every change of its present state, either of motion or rest, and its infinite divisibility. From the former of these properties it follows, that matter, so far from being capable of being

ing endued with a power of thinking, which is the most perfect action, cannot be endued with any active power whatsoever; since upon this supposition it would, at the same time, be possessed of two contrary and incompatible qualities; a power to change its state, either of motion or rest, and an absolute resistance to all change of either. From the other property of matter it follows, that as each parcel of it is not one, but an infinite number of *substances*, each of which is distinct from all the rest, as the whole mass is from any other whole, no portion of it could ever be made to compose one thinking being, but must consist of as many distinct souls as it had parts, *i. e.* an infinity. This difficulty is not to be got over by the wild and unphilosophical hypothesis of all these substances being made to compose but one person, by having in common one and the same individual consciousness. For even allowing the possibility of the *thing*, this would no more make all these thinking substances to be but one such substance, than two different men having the same con-

sciousness

ſciouſneſs of the ſame action, would make them both but one perſon. For, notwithſtanding what has been advanced to the contrary by a *great name*, conſciouſneſs does not conſtitute perſonal identity. For then no man could be the ſame perſon two *moments* together, or at moſt, only whilſt he actually retained his conſciouſneſs. Conſciouſneſs, I ſay, does not conſtitute perſonal identity, but is only that reflex act of the mind, by which every man knows his thoughts and actions to be *his* thoughts and actions; which they may be, whether he knows them to be ſo or not. If it ſhould be ſaid, that God, by his almighty power, might *ſuperadd* to matter a power of thinking, we anſwer, that a contradiction is neither an object nor a limitation of Omnipotency. And ſuch it is to effect, that the ſame thing ſhould be at the ſame time matter and not matter, a ſingle being and a million. Since, then, it ſo plainly appears, that all matter is abſolutely incapable of thought and action, and can only be moved, directed, and acted upon, by ſomething which has both theſe in itſelf;

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all who maintain that the ſoul of man is nothing but matter, do thereby degrade it to a mere paſſive *lump*; deſtroy all diſtinction of good and evil, virtue and vice, *make* religion an unmeaning ſound, and revelation a downright farce, no leſs ſo than that of the popiſh ſaint's preaching to the fiſh.

The other opinion deſtructive of human liberty, is that of thoſe, who maintain the irreſiſtibility of divine grace; making the Holy Spirit to act upon us, as if we were nothing but a *piece* of machinery, by overpowering our wills, and compelling us to act as He would have us; and then rewarding us for what was not our, but his act. A doctrine inconſiſtent with God's moral attributes. For He is confeſſed by *all* to have made us both intelligent and rational creatures, and is allowed by theſe men to have given us in other caſes a freedom of choice and action; and yet is ſuppoſed to treat us in this, as if we had neither the one nor the other. And what ſhall we ſay to all thoſe calls and invitations to ſinners, which we

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meet with in ſcripture, to repentance and amendment? To all thoſe expoſtulations with them for the hardneſs of their hearts, and to all thoſe exhortations and encouragements to ſtrive and labour to enter into life; to give diligence to make our calling and election ſure, and to work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling? Which are only ſo many taunts and mockings, if the whole work of our converſion is effected by the ſole and incontrollable power of the Almighty! He has indeed been pleaſed to promiſe us the aſſiſtance of his Spirit, by enlightening our underſtanding, helping our infirmities, and ſtrengthening us with might in the inner man; but he has no where engaged to take the whole upon himſelf. We muſt do our part, by the vigorous exertion of the natural powers he has given us. Theſe aſſiſtances of the Holy Spirit, may very eaſily be conceived to be entirely compatible with the freedom of our natures. For as we are often prevailed upon to alter our opinions and reform our judgments, by the reaſons and arguments offered to us by our friends, and

yet

yet are conſcious at the ſame time, that we have a power, if we pleaſe, to act otherwiſe; why may it not be ſuppoſed, that God's Spirit produces a ſimilar effect, by its ſecret and inviſible operation on our minds; by preſenting us with a clear and diſtinct view of all particulars, proper for our conſideration; by engaging our attention, and removing or keeping off all obſtructions to the full and free exerciſe of our judgment and underſtanding; by comforting, ſtrengthening, and ſettling us. All which operations, are perfectly conſiſtent with the freedom of our wills; and as they are aſſiſtances only, do plainly imply, that God does not take the whole work of our converſion upon Himſelf, but leaves ſomewhat to be done by ourſelves. "There is," ſays an eminent writer *, "in the language of *Scripture*, made uſe of "to explain the doctrine of grace, ſome-"thing liable to be abuſed by ignorant or "crafty men. It is ſaid, that of ourſelves "we can do nothing; whence they con-"clude, that we have nothing to do. It "is

* Biſhop Sherlock.

"is said, that it is the grace of God which "enables us to do every thing, from "whence they conclude, that every thing "must be left to the grace of God, and "that we, with a strong persuasion of this, "may sit still ourselves. But, proceeds he, "let us try this language in a common case, "and see whether it be so hard to be un-"derstood. Suppose a man wanted to move "a weight, that required double his strength "to move it, would it be a proper ex-"pression, to say, of himself he could do "nothing? Or would it follow, that, if "he was offered help, he should sit still and "not put his own strength to the work? "If a friend came to his assistance, would "it not be properly said, that his friend "enabled him to do what he did? But "would it follow that his friend did all, "and he nothing?" Thus far he. To which we may add, that these divine assistances are so far from destroying our liberty, that they rather tend to improve it to its highest perfection; so that we may justly say with the Apostle, *Where the Spirit of the*

Lord

Lord is, there is liberty, even the glorious *liberty of the ſons of God*; and of the moſt exalted beings, an entire freedom from all corrupt affections and undue influences, and a voluntary and chearful compliance with the dictates of reaſon and the laws of God, upon a full conviction and thorough ſenſe of our duty.

There are two or three inferences naturally ariſing from the foregoing diſcourſe, and with which I ſhall conclude.

Firſt, That as our liberty is the eſſence and foundation of our guilt, ſince without it we ſhould be no more accountable than the ſtones we walk upon; ſo will it be a dreadful aggravation of our puniſhment hereafter, when we reflect upon our paſt conduct, and cannot but confeſs that all we ſuffer is the work of our own hands, the portion of our own free choice.—That when we were guilty of any wickedneſs, we not only had a full power to abſtain from it, but were forced to offer violence to ourſelves, to

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our reason and conscience, before we could bring ourselves to commit it. Such reflections as these, we shall never be free from in the place of torment. They will be the worm that never dieth, will incessantly prey upon our souls, and *devour* them. Whensoever, therefore, thy passions are in the highest ferment, and sin approaches thee in its most alluring form, do but attend to the still voice of thy reason, and it will tell thee what madness thou art possessed with, in preferring death to life, when both are set before thee, and in doing that which thou shalt in vain repent of to all eternity.

But then, secondly, on the other hand, we must not entertain a high opinion of our own merit, as if our conversion was the sole effect of our own endeavours. Not only the word of God, but our own hearts, if fairly consulted, will tell us that our sufficiency is of God; that it is owing to the gracious assistances He has been pleased to afford us, that we have been enabled to resist and overcome the evil inclinations and corrupt affec-

tions of our nature. We muſt recollect ſeveral inſtances, in which, though we have at laſt held faſt our integrity, and *come* off as conquerors, the combat was for a long time doubtful, and we were *very near* a defeat; and that unleſs we had been ſupported by a ſuperior Power, the impetuoſity of our paſſions would have prevailed over the ſtruggles of our conſcience, and the ſpirit have yielded itſelf up a captive to the fleſh. Let us then humbly confeſs the infirmity and depravity of our nature, and devoutly apply to God for the grace of his Holy Spirit; and when we have thereby obtained the victory over the enemies of our ſalvation, let us gratefully acknowledge the hand which helped us, with a *Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the praiſe; whoſe grace*, in *ſpite* of all obſtructions, *has been ſufficient for us, and whoſe ſtrength has been made perfect in our weakneſs.*

Laſtly, As it is of our luſts that we are drawn away and enticed to ſin, let us endeavour to mortify and break the power of them,

them, by a life of temperance and ſobriety, and by abſtaining from every thing that may either raiſe or inflame them; but, above all, by having our minds deeply impreſſed by all thoſe motives and arguments which our holy religion furniſhes us with, for the ſuppreſſion of all our irregular appetites and deſires. *Taking the whole armour of God, that we may be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil; and putting on the ſhield of faith, whereby we ſhall be able to quench the fiery darts of the wicked; and for an helmet, the hope of ſalvation. Praying always with all prayer and ſupplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perſeverance.*

SERMON V.

MATT. XV. 28.

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

I Believe there is scarce any one, but who upon the first reading, or hearing the transaction contained in this and the preceding verses, was somewhat surprized at the seeming roughness and severity with which our Blessed Lord treats a poor unhappy woman, who applies to him with the utmost respect and humility. So different was his behaviour upon this occasion, from what we find it upon all other. Ever, be-

fore now, He was all meekneſs and tenderneſs, ready to extend his mercy to the miſerable as ſoon as aſked for, and almoſt preventing their deſires. No ſooner did the ruler beſeech Him to come and heal his ſon, but he was anſwered, *Go thy way, thy ſon liveth.* No ſooner did the lame and the blind implore his pity, but He could ſay unto the one, *Take up thy bed and walk*; unto the other, *Receive thy ſight.* Nay, we find Him treating even perſons of ill fame with great kindneſs and condeſcenſion, when He found any ſigns of a ſincere repentance in them; ſo that He was reproachfully called, *The friend of publicans and ſinners.* And yet we here ſee Him under a quite different character, appearing, for ſome time, either to be inſenſible, or wilfully to diſregard the cries of the miſerable; and at laſt granting the favour which was aſked of Him, with great reluctance, and when He could no longer refuſe it; and this too in a caſe, where every circumſtance both deſerved and called for his immediate pity and relief.

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I propose, therefore, First, To go over the particulars of this extraordinary transaction.

Secondly, To explain and vindicate the true design and intention of our Lord.

Thirdly, To make some reflections and observations upon the whole.

We read at the 22d verse of this chapter, that whilst Jesus was retired into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, a woman of Canaan, who having heard of his great goodness, and the mighty works He had done, believed Him from thence to be a Prophet, and a Teacher sent from God, came to Him, and cried unto Him, saying, *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David*; (for so she had heard Him called) *my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* A most piteous spectacle this! A woman and a mother following Him with her cries, and imploring his mercy to her wretched daughter, who was tormented with a dreadful disorder. She brings not the possessed before Him,

nor presses Him, as others had done, *Lord, come and lay thy hand upon her*; or, *Come down ere my child die*; but only tells Him the case in two words, and leaves all to his mercy. And yet all this misery, and all this humility, seemed to have no effect upon Him. *He answered her not a word.* Who would not have been offended, at the slight and inattention her petition met with? It is plain his disciples were so; for immediately *they came and besought Him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us*; but even these powerful intercessors could do no more than draw this answer from Him, *I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*; that is, I am not now sent to the Gentiles. The time is not yet come, when the mercy of the Gospel is to be offered unto them. The design of my mission is to make the first tenders of my grace and mercy to the Jews, God's peculiar people. An answer more mortifying than his silence; for that, at most, only told her that He would not; but this, that He could not relieve her. And yet so far from going away in despair,

she

ſhe grows more importunate, throws herſelf at Chriſt's feet, *and worſhipped Him, ſaying, Lord, help me.* Who would not now expect a gracious anſwer, to ſuch an earneſt and humble ſupplicant. But what follows, adds greatly to the ſeverity of the repulſe. *He anſwered and ſaid, It is not meet to take the children's bread,* the mercy which was intended for God's peculiar people, *and to caſt it unto dogs,* to you who are Gentiles and ſtrangers. How few are there but would have been provoked, by ſo diſguſting a compariſon, immediately to have turned their backs upon Him, with the warmeſt expreſſions of reſentment and indignation? But, behold, how meekly, how calmly ſhe anſwers him! *Truth, Lord; yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their maſter's table.* And here we know not which we ſhould moſt admire, the modeſty and humility, or the ſhrewdneſs and good ſenſe of the woman's anſwer to our Lord. Thou haſt called me a dog, and I own myſelf to be no better; give me then the privilege of a dog: Allow me to gather up ſome crumbs

of

of mercy from under that table, at which thy children sit. The indulgence I crave, though great to me, yet with regard to thy infinite goodness, bears no more proportion than a crumb to a feast. This small favour, granted to me, a poor stranger, will be no diminution of thy mercy to thy people Israel. Upon which our Lord, no less surprized at her patience and meekness, than vanquished, as it were, by her modest importunity, answered her, *O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

Having now gone over the particulars of this transaction, I proceed, 2dly, To explain and vindicate the true design and intention of our Lord in it.

And, First, With regard to the woman herself; He who knoweth the hearts of all men, could be no stranger to the sincerity of her faith, and was already resolved to reward her accordingly; and because He knew her

her ſo well, He deſigned to ſhew her to others alſo, in the moſt advantageous point of view; and to exhibit the virtues ſhe was poſſeſſed of, in all their genuine ſtrength and beauty. The affected ſilence and neglect with which, at the firſt, He treated her, did ſufficiently ſhew her patience and conſtancy; but the bitterneſs of his words, and the ignominy with which He rejects her petition, do moreover evince the ſtedfaſtneſs of her faith, and truſt in his goodneſs, the greateſt meekneſs, and moſt reſigned humility. All which virtues and good qualities would have been entirely hid and unknown, had he granted her requeſt, upon her firſt application to Him. As for the ſeeming ſeverity ſhe was at firſt treated with, that was abundantly made up to her by the effectual deliverance ſhe immediately obtained for her daughter; and the ſuſpence and anxiety under which ſhe was kept for a few moments, ſerved only to give a higher reliſh to the pleaſure ſhe afterwards received. However, it muſt be confeſſed, that if this woman alone had been concerned in the iſſue of this

affair,

affair, it is very probable our Lord would have treated her with the ſame tenderneſs, and have granted her requeſt with the ſame readineſs he obſerved towards other petitioners; but, as his views were not confined to this ſingle caſe, many others being intereſted in the ſame, He thought proper to proceed with a particular caution and reſerve.

For, in the next place, with regard to the Jews, He might intend to obviate the objections, and preclude the cenſures of that captious generation; who, if He had immediately complied with the woman's requeſt, might have reproached Him with being a tranſgreſſor of the law of Moſes; in which it was forbid the Iſraelites to have any communication with the Canaanites (of whom this woman was deſcended) and the other ſix nations: which prohibition was intended both as a puniſhment to thoſe people, for the enormous ſins they were guilty of, and as a guard to keep the Jews from being infected with their idolatry. Now, as our

Lord

Lord was upon all other occasions, a strict observer of the law, so He would not be thought to have no regard to it upon this. He therefore suspends his mercy towards this woman, until she may be said even to extort it from Him; until He could no longer refuse it to one, who, with the blood of a Canaanite, had the faith and virtue of a true Israelite; who was *a daughter of Abraham, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit; following the steps, and imitating the faith of Abraham.*

But farther, our Lord might intend hereby to recommend Himself and his doctrine to the Jews, by shewing them that they were still considered as the peculiar people of God. They were *the children who were first to be filled,* who were to have the first tenders of the Gospel mercies; and that the Gentiles were only to have their leavings, to be fed with that meat which should remain after they were satisfied, or which they refused to eat. And this was agreeable to the whole tenor of God's dealings with that ungrateful

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and infatuated people. *To them pertained the adoption, and the promises, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came.* He was born, lived, and died amongst them. Judea was the *scene* both of his glory and his sufferings; their eyes beheld the mighty works which He performed, and their ears heard *the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth*; and it was not till after his resurrection, till they had stood out against this last and greatest of his miracles, that the Gospel was preached unto the Gentiles. Accordingly we find Paul and Barnabas declaring to the Jews (Acts xiii. 46.) *It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken unto you; but seeing you put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.* And therefore Christ might also intend hereby, to set forth this woman as a reproach to the Jews, for their unbelief and hardness of heart; for here they might see a poor stranger, and a woman who had been brought up amongst those who knew neither the law

nor

nor the prophets, still persevering in her faith and patience; and, though neglected and despised, imploring his compassion; who would not vouchsafe to answer her; and prostrating herself at those feet, which, as it were, spurned her from them: Whereas they, the highly favoured of God above all the nations of the earth, and distinguished by particular privileges and the most extraordinary mercies, were always, as their own prophets testify, *a stiff-necked and rebellious generation*; always murmuring and complaining, and every now and then falling away into the grossest idolatry. Not the most tender and indulgent parent could shew more concern for his most beloved child, than Christ did for that people; and yet, instead of the returns He might justly have expected from them, He met with the most cruel usage; they were ever abusing and reviling Him, and at last became his murderers. It is therefore, I say, highly probable, that our Lord designed to set forth this Canaanite as a contrast to their ingratitude. For behold that faith in this despised

stranger,

ſtranger, *which was not to be found, no, not in Iſrael!*

Laſtly, Our Lord might extend his views much farther than to the ſingle people of the Jews, even to all thoſe who ſhould afterwards become his diſciples; inſtructing them, by this example, in thoſe virtues and qualifications which are requiſite to make them, and their addreſſes to the Almighty, well pleaſing in his ſight. For from hence we may learn, how neceſſary it is *to continue inſtant in prayer.*—That the more importunate we are, the more likely we are to obtain our requeſts.—That we ſhould not grow impatient, or deſponding, if God does not immediately anſwer our petitions; but meekly renew our addreſſes to Him with the greater earneſtneſs and fervency, firmly truſting in his goodneſs, that He will ſtill be gracious unto us; and that He only delays to anſwer us, in order to ſerve ſome benevolent purpoſe towards ourſelves or others. For thus we ſee in the caſe before us: the ſeeming neglect with which our Lord at firſt

received

received the woman's suit to Him, served to make her virtue and merit more illustrious, and thereby intitle her to a greater reward; and at the same time likewise gave a most useful lesson to the Jews, had they been so wise as to follow it. But, above all, we should from hence be taught the absolute necessity of humility, to the success of our prayers and addresses to the throne of grace; there being nothing which recommends us more to God's favour, than the having a due sense of our own unworthiness. For as *God resisteth the proud, so He giveth grace to the humble.* It was this excellent virtue in the Canaanite, which so agreeably surprized and vanquished the Blessed Jesus. When the absolute denial He gave her, embittered by so disgusting a reproach, *It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto dogs,* had no other effect upon her, than to make her still more meek and humble, *Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table;* He could no longer hold out, but immediately replies, *O woman, great is thy faith,*

be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. Or as St. Mark relates it, (Mark vii. 29.) *for this ſaying, Go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter.*

And thus, I think, it ſufficiently appears, what were the real motives and intentions of our Lord in this proceeding; and that they were entirely agreeable and conſiſtent with that wiſdom and goodneſs, which He ſo eminently diſplayed upon all other occaſions. For thus He not only moſt completely manifeſted and rewarded the patience and conſtancy, the faith and humility of the woman who applied to Him, but at the ſame time obviated the objections, beſpoke the favour, and reproached the infidelity of the Jewiſh nation, as well as gave a very inſtructive leſſon to all mankind.

I ſhall conclude with a few reflections and obſervations on the whole tranſaction we have been conſidering.

First,

First, We ſhould, with grateful hearts, reflect, that by the merciful diſpenſation of the Goſpel, the terms of the compariſon here uſed, are moſt happily tranſpoſed in our favour. We Gentiles are become the children, and the Jews the dogs. We ſit down to the table, are fed with the word of truth, and partake of the choiceſt mercies of the Goſpel, whilſt they can only *gather up the crumbs which fall under it*; can only enjoy thoſe common favours and bleſſings, which the ordinary providence of God has ſcattered amongſt the reſt of mankind. Thus St. Paul (Epheſ. ii. 19.) ſpeaking to the Gentile converts, ſays, *Now ye are no more ſtrangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the ſaints, and of the houſhold of God.* Let us then endeavour to act agreeable to that honourable relation we now ſtand in by the Goſpel, by ſhewing forth all that fear and reverence, all that love and obedience, which ſuch a Father moſt juſtly deſerves and demands of us; leſt He caſt us off, as He has done thoſe who once ſtood in our place: or, to uſe the reaſoning of the

ſame Apoſtle in another compariſon, (Rom. xi. 17, &c.) *If ſome of the branches of the olive-tree were broken off, and thou being a wild olive-tree was grafted in; and if they, becauſe of unbelief, were broken off, and thou ſtandeſt by faith, be not high-minded, but fear. For if God ſpared not the natural branches, take heed leſt He alſo ſpare not thee.*

2dly, We may obſerve, That that faith in the woman, which our Bleſſed Saviour ſo highly commended, and ſo amply rewarded, was not barely the faith ſhe profeſſed in his Meſſiahſhip and Divine miſſion, that ſhe did ſufficiently when ſhe gave Him the title of the *Son of David*, implored his mercy, and worſhipped him; and yet could obtain no anſwer from him; but it was a faith accompanied with patience, meekneſs, and humility. And from hence we may learn, what is the nature of that faith which muſt juſtify us before God, and finally ſave our ſouls; not a ſolitary and unfruitful faith, but ſuch an one as is productive of all good works, and attended by all the virtues and

graces

graces of our christian profession. *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

And this leads us to a third observation, viz. The insignificancy of a mere outside devotion, or of how little value in the sight of God are all the external signs of piety, if unaccompanied with the proper affections and dispositions. For here we see, that neither the acknowledgment of Christ's power and divinity, nor the imploring his mercy with loud and repeated cries; neither the bended knee, nor the lowest prostration, could draw a favourable, or any answer at all from Him. For all these were no certain indications of a true internal piety: but when by the woman's most admirable and pertinent answer to that trying saying of our Lord's, *It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto dogs*, she had undeniably proved the true spirit of the faith and piety by which she was actuated, she forthwith received from our Lord as full and satisfactory an answer to her petition, as even her own hopes

and wiſhes could have dictated unto Him, *Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt.* And thus it is we may account for the ill ſucceſs both of our own, and other men's prayers. They are not offered up with faith, and thoſe other holy diſpoſitions, which are requiſite to the acceptance of them with the Almighty. We only *draw near unto Him with our lips, whilſt our hearts are far from Him*; engaged in purſuits of a quite different nature, or immerſed in the thoughts of ſin and folly; and therefore no wonder, in this caſe, *we aſk and receive not, becauſe we aſk amiſs.*

4thly and laſtly, We may aſſure ourſelves, that if we imitate the faith, and other virtues of the Canaanite, we ſhall meet with the ſame favour and compaſſion from the merciful Jeſus which ſhe did. We cannot, indeed, come to Him with her petition, *Lord have mercy upon me, my daughter is grievouſly vexed with a devil*; but we may all of us ſay unto Him, Lord have mercy upon me, my ſoul is grievouſly vexed with ſin, which is the worſt of devils, and which will

 prove

prove a much ſorer plague to our ſouls, than a whole legion of devils can be to the body; for theſe can only exerciſe their malice upon us for a ſhort time, but that will eternally vex and torment us. If, therefore, we apply unto Chriſt for relief, with the faith and piety of this woman, the ſame gracious anſwer will be given unto us, as was unto her, *Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt*, and our ſouls ſhall be made whole *from that very hour*.

To conclude. Let not the faith of a Heathen be a reproach unto us Chriſtians, as it was unto the Jews.—Let us well conſider the much ſtronger obligations we are under, both to believe and practiſe our holy religion; and that if under all the advantages we enjoy of greater light in the knowledge of our duty, and greater encouragements to the performance of it, we ſtill continue infidels, either in ſpeculation or practice, this woman *ſhall riſe up in the judgment againſt us, and condemn us*; and *that it ſhall be more tolerable in that day* for a poor unenlightened

Heathen, than for us. God grant that none of us may find it so, but that we may all of us make such an use of the means of grace afforded us here, that we may not forfeit our hopes of glory hereafter.

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SERMON VI.

JOHN xxi. 22.

Jesus saith unto him, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.

ALL knowledge which may promote our own, or other men's happiness, or may conduce to the improvement, or ornament of our natures, is certainly a very laudable object of our pursuit, highly worthy of us; and distinguishes us from the brute part of the creation, who are guided only by such appetites and affections, as are necessary to their preservation, and the continuance of their species: but a desire to be informed of such truths as no ways concern us,

us, or are improper ſubjects of our inquiries, and can ſerve no other purpoſe, but to gratify an idle curioſity, is a mark of a ſhallow judgment, and a trifling underſtanding, and takes us off from what is of infinitely more conſequence to us. Such was that of St. Peter in the text. St. John was Chriſt's beloved diſciple, and, as it generally happens, that a favourite with his maſter, is not ſo with his fellow-ſervants, but rather an object of their envy and ill-will; and as there is reaſon to think that the ſame prejudices prevailed amongſt the other diſciples, with regard to St. John, ſo we may ſuppoſe, that when St. Peter, upon Chriſt's ordering him to follow him, *turned about, and ſeeing St. John, ſaith unto Jeſus, Lord, and what ſhall this man do?* What employment doſt thou deſign for him? And how doſt thou intend to diſpoſe of him? He does not mean to expreſs a wiſh that St. John might be diſtinguiſhed from the other diſciples, by ſome new and peculiar marks of favour, but rather a diſſatisfaction at his having already been ſo diſtinguiſhed; and a

deſire

desire to know whether, and how far, he would be so for the future: but our Lord, instead of gratifying his curiosity, reproves his impertinence, by telling him, *If I will that he tarry till I come*, that he continue in this world till my second coming, *what is that to thee?* Only mind thy own business; do as thou art bid, and *follow thou me*. My design is from hence to vindicate and illustrate the rebuke here given by Christ to St. Peter, by producing similar instances, in which men are as unnecessarily curious and inquisitive after what is of no concern to them, and which God has been pleased to conceal from them.

And the first great subject of our doubts and enquiries, is the dispensations of God's providence, with regard to others and ourselves. Now there is one short and self-evident principle, which must satisfy us in all our doubts about them; which is this, that an infinitely wise, just, and good God, must, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, do what, upon the whole, is right, best,

beſt, and fitteſt to be done; or, as it is well expreſſed, *whatever is, is right*. Is right, not abſtractedly in itſelf, but when conſidered and compared with all its dependencies, connexions, and conſequences. Thus that an innocent perſon ſhould ſuffer, or be made miſerable, if we ſtop here, and go no farther, is certainly inconſiſtent with all our notions of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs; but that ſuch an one ſhould only be made miſerable for a time, in order to his obtaining a greater degree of happineſs, or only to prevent his being much more miſerable afterwards, all our complaints againſt Providence muſt be turned into praiſe and adoration; much more, if it ſhould be found, that the ſufferings of one innocent man, had contributed, not only to his own happineſs, but to that of many others alſo. Even in this world, the meaſures and proceedings of the beſt and wiſeſt governments, often appear unaccountable to us, for want of knowing the real grounds and extent of them; which, after we have been made acquainted with, we cannot but admire and applaud

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the wisdom which concerted them. Is it then at all to be wondered at, that in God's government of the world, through all its successive periods, from the creation to the dissolution of all things, many of his dispensations should appear mysterious and unaccountable to us, as we can only see the minutest part of a most complicated and extensive plan. And do we not sometimes in the opening, progress, or winding up of his measures towards man, find occasion to adore the wisdom and goodness which we before denied, or doubted of? The history of Joseph, in the Old Testament, exhibits to us a beautiful picture of Providence, and of its dealings with the children of men. Thus who that beheld him in any one of the scenes of his distress, in the pit into which he had been thrown by his envious and unnatural brethren, and there left by them to perish by a cruel and lingering death, even that of famine,—when a false accusation had been brought against him by his master's wife, only because he would not, by complying with her lewdness, be false to a kind master

who

who had put ſuch confidence in him, nor commit ſo great a wickedneſs and ſin againſt God; and when, in conſequence of this, he was confined to a cloſe impriſonment, without any hopes of being releaſed from it;—who, I ſay, could help regretting, that ſo much virtue and innocence were not able to preſerve him from ſuch dreadful evils, and pronouncing him forſaken both of God and man? And yet we find, that all theſe unmerited ſufferings ended in his own exaltation to the higheſt honours, and the preſervation of his father, and the whole family, from periſhing by the ſame death which his brethren had intended to inflict upon him; who, when he made himſelf known unto them, inſtead of reproaching them with their cruelty, comforts, and even apologizes for them. *Be not*, ſays he, *grieved nor angry with yourſelves, for it was not you that ſent me hither, but God, who ſent me before you, to preſerve you a poſterity in the earth, and to ſave your lives by a great deliverance.* And have we not many of us, in the courſe of our lives, repined and mur-

mured

mured at God's dealings with us, as too ſevere and galling, when we have afterwards been convinced that they have been real bleſſings to us, by preſerving us from much greater calamities, or procuring us comforts and advantages which we could not otherwiſe have obtained? But though all our doubts about the ways of God's providence ſhould never be cleared up in this world, yet we Chriſtians muſt know, that in the next, when God ſhall have finally cloſed the whole ſcheme and plan of his government on earth, that all our doubts will be loſt in a full conviction of the wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs of all his proceedings; and that as then all accounts will be ſettled betwixt God and his creatures, and the happineſs or miſery which each man has enjoyed or ſuffered, ſet one againſt the other, and the full balance allowed to every man, all *his judgments* will appear as *clear as the light*, and his *dealings* with ourſelves and others *as the noon day*. What then are all ſuch matters to us, in our preſent ſtate? Make no fruitleſs enquiries after them, but leave them entirely in his

hands,

hands, who will certainly do what is right and beſt. What, therefore, this or that man ſhall do, how God intends to deal with either of them, is nothing to thee; to their own maſter *they ſtand or fall.* All that thou haſt to do is, to attend to the one thing needful.—Follow thy Saviour and Redeemer.—Be his faithful ſoldier and ſervant to thy life's end, and depend upon it, he will make all things work together for thy good, and will be thy *exceeding great* reward.

Another great ſubject of our needleſs and improper enquiries, principally relates to ourſelves, and our ſolicitude about the things of this life; ſuch as an eager purſuit after riches and honours, an exceſſive dread of poverty and contempt, or an over-anxious concern for the ſucceſs of our own ſchemes and undertakings; all which are highly improper to take up the whole time and thoughts of a Chriſtian, or even to be the principal and favourite employments of them, being inconſiſtent with his duty, and unworthy his profeſſion. For this ſhews that the love of

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the world has taken a much deeper root in his heart, than the love of God; and that he diſtruſts that Providence which has promiſed never to leave nor forſake him, but to continue to him all the neceſſaries and comforts of life, provided he does in the firſt place, in preference to every thing elſe, *ſeek the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs*. We ſhall conſider farther, that though riches, honours, and proſperity do ſometimes prove real bleſſings to their owners, by enabling them to promote more effectually the cauſe of virtue and religion, and to be more extenſively benevolent to their fellow-creatures, yet it is much oftener found that they are the nurſes of pride, inſolence, and oppreſſion; the fomenters of luxury and debauchery, and the root of many fooliſh and hurtful luſts; ſo that what we covet and purſue ſo eagerly, may, for *aught* we know, prove a curſe to us; and had much better be left entirely to his good will and pleaſure, who alone knows what is beſt for us, and what is more likely to improve our virtue, and increaſe our happineſs.

Secondly, As our Lord reproves the impertinent curiosity of his other disciples, in their desiring to know how he intended to deal with St. John; and particularly, whether he was to be distinguished from the rest of them by some peculiar privilege; so are we no less blameable when we too inquisitively pry into the secrets of God's providence, with regard to other men, and perplex ourselves with the conjectures of the good or evil that is likely to befal them. For *what is that to thee?* It is no concern of thine. God, you may depend upon it, will deal with them, as to him seemeth good, and without consulting or acquainting thee with his intentions: only be thou sure to *follow* him and his most holy laws, and, whatever happens to others, it shall surely be *well with thee, and happy thou shalt be.*

For the same reason, we should not, 3dly, Be over anxious about the time of our own decease, and how long it is our Maker's intention we should *tarry here*; for though a desire to live is a very natural and necessary one,

one, and it is our duty to uſe all proper means to preſerve and prolong our lives, yet as it has pleaſed God, for good and wiſe reaſons, and in great mercy to us, to conceal from us the preciſe time of our departure hence, it does not become us to employ our thoughts and enquiries about it. That *it is appointed unto men once to die*, is the moſt awful and important reflection which can poſſeſs the mind of man, and which indeed ſhould never be long out of it, ſince by this means *our laſt enemy* will become leſs and leſs formidable to us; and we ſhall be leſs affected with any alarm of his approach, however ſudden and unexpected, eſpecially if we obſerve St. Paul's direction of dying daily; or ſpending each day with the ſame caution, and *taking heed to our ways*, as if it was to be our laſt.

And this leads me to a fourth improper ſubject of enquiries, *viz.* What is the particular nature of that happineſs which we ſhall enjoy in the next world, and in what manner we ſhall ſpend an eternity! For ſince

God has been pleased to conceal this matter from us, as well as the very day and hour of our death, we should rest contented with those general declarations we meet with in Scripture about it. Such as these. That in that blessed state *there shall be no more death, no more sorrow, nor pain, but a fulness of joy, and pleasures which shall last for evermore. That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him. That Christ shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. That we shall be as the angels which are in heaven, and for ever be with the Lord.* And, in order to raise our ideas of our future happiness, it is represented to us under such images and metaphors, as are taken from the things most highly esteemed on earth; such as a *treasure, an inheritance undefiled and that fadeth not away, a crown* and *a kingdom.* It is therefore enough for us to be assured, that he who made and fashioned us, cannot but know what will make us compleatly

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happy in every ſtage, and through every period of our exiſtence; and that as He has promiſed to make us ſo, He certainly will be as good as his word. We may therefore reſt fully ſatisfied, that the joys of heaven, whatever may be the particular nature of them, will be perfectly ſuitable to our glorified ſtate; when this *corruptible ſhall have put on incorruption, and this mortal ſhall have put on immortality*; and ſuch as we ſhall always partake of with an unabated delight and ſatisfaction, continually heightened by the tranſporting reflection that they can never, no, never have an end. There is, however, a pleaſing hope and fond expectation, which is often entertained by the ſerious and affectionate chriſtian, that, in our future ſtate of bleſſedneſs, we ſhall know and be made known to our deareſt friends and relations which are gone before us, and for ever enjoy their ſociety. For though there are ſome intimations in ſcripture, which ſeem to favour this opinion, and it would certainly add to our happineſs to have them partakers of it, yet as there

are no expreſs declarations in ſcripture to this purpoſe, and all our notices and informations about our future ſtate can come from thence only; and there is ſome reaſon to doubt, whether, as we and our friends may hereafter be in very different ſituations, their abſence from the place we are in, may not be as great a drawback upon our happineſs, as their preſence with us would be an acceſſion to it: unleſs we ſuppoſe, that our ſouls will then be entirely diveſted of all thoſe affections which ariſe from the preſent infirmity of our natures, and be advanced to higher degrees of perfection, and approach much nearer to that of God himſelf; ſo that as He would have all men to be ſaved and be happy, and has provided them with the means of being actually ſo, yet if by refuſing to uſe thoſe means, they bring eternal miſery upon themſelves, their folly can give him no ſort of pain or uneaſineſs, but He ſtill continues infinitely happy in himſelf. In like manner, if upon our attaining the joys of heaven, we ſhould find that ſome of thoſe who were deareſt to us in

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this world are in the place of torment; though we could not but wish that they, like us, had been wise unto salvation, yet it is a wish only that will be attended with no diminution of our own happiness, as we shall entirely acquiesce in the justice of God's dealings with them, and be filled with a continual and grateful sense of his grace and mercy to us. However, as all these are only speculations of our own, grounded upon no clear and explicit declarations of the word of God, it is much better to leave this whole matter to his wisdom and goodness, who, we may depend upon it, will either grant or deny us this knowledge of our friends in the other world, as He sees most proper for us, and most conducive to our happiness.

Instead, therefore, of perplexing ourselves with such fruitless enquiries after the particulars of which our future happiness shall consist, it much more becomes and concerns us to consider well, and often, what grounds we have to hope, that we shall be partakers

of that happineſs; and that if this night God ſhould *require our ſouls of us*, we can depart in peace, and with the comfortable aſſurance of entering into *his* joy; which is to be had, not as ſome enthuſiaſts would perſuade us, from I know not what feelings, or rather fancies of our own, but (from whence alone it can be had) from the word of God; where the terms of grace and mercy offered unto us through Chriſt, are expreſſed ſo clearly, that we cannot miſapprehend them, even in two *ſhort* words, Faith and Repentance. So that we have nothing more to do, than to give our conſciences a fair hearing, and they will honeſtly tell us how all accounts ſtand betwixt God and our ſouls —Whether we have that faith, that truſt and confidence in our Redeemer, which are required from us.—Whether we have entirely forſaken and amended our former ſins, and have nothing elſe to anſwer for but the common and unavoidable infirmities of our nature. This is the only ſure method we can take to be aſſured of the ſtrength or weakneſs of our title to ſalvation, and in

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which we cannot be deceived, but by our wishing and desiring to be so.

I shall conclude this discourse with an observation on the different characters of St. Peter and St. John, and the different marks of favour they received from their Master. The former appears to have been of a very warm and affectionate disposition, glad of an opportunity of distinguishing himself from his fellow-disciples by the forwardness of his zeal, and *warmth* of his professions: but as men of this complexion are generally possessed by too high an opinion of themselves, and their own steadiness, they are apt, for want of a proper calmness and caution, to be surprized by any unexpected emergency, to be thrown off their guard, and hurried into very gross inconsistencies. Thus we find, that though St. Peter did, upon some occasions, receive the highest commendations from his Master, for his frank and generous professions of his belief of Christ's Messiahship, so upon others he was as severely reproved for his timidity and

want

want of faith. Nay, when our Lord, just before his being betrayed, and delivered into the hands of his enemies, had forewarned Peter, that before that day was gone, *even in that night, before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice*; and Peter had answered *the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise*; yet behold, that very night, according to Christ's prediction, before *the cock crowed twice* did he thrice deny him, and with oaths and curses abjure all knowledge of him. Whereas St. John's character was entirely uniform and consistent — without any extraordinary flights of zeal — constantly attending upon, and attached to his Master; — steadily walking on in the path of duty, without ever deviating from it; at least there is none upon record: and there is good reason to think this was really the case, from the continual marks of favour and affection he received from our Lord during the whole course of his ministry, and from his recommending his mother to St. John's care and protection when He was expiring upon the cross. For we cannot

not ſuppoſe that Chriſt choſe his favourites as men do theirs, from mere whim and caprice, without any regard to their real worth and character; and therefore that St. John was his moſt beloved diſciple, becauſe he was the moſt worthy of his love.

From hence we may infer the following concluſions: — That an actual and uniform attendance to our duty, is far more acceptable in the ſight of God, than the moſt flaming zeal, the moſt emphatical profeſſions of our love, or even a faith that could *remove mountains*, when they break out into thoſe exceſſes as are the uſual attendants upon ſuch violent and extraordinary emotions. — That an humble acquieſcence in what God has clearly revealed to us, is much more commendable than curious enquiries into what He has thought fit to conceal from us; and that from the example of St. Peter, we ſhould learn not to be over-confident of our own ſtrength and ſteadineſs, but, with a modeſt and humble ſenſe of our own frailty, to beg of God a continual ſupply of his grace,

that

that we may be enabled to *pass* innocently and safely through all the *changes and chances of this mortal life*, and that *He would not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but with the temptation also make a way for our escape.* Be it then our fixed resolution to follow Christ, whenever or wherever He calls us.—Never to be *ashamed of Him and his words*, but to glory in our profession, and to *count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.*—Let us follow Him as far as the infirmity of our nature will allow us, in the holiness of his life, in his patience and humility, in universal love and charity, in mortification and self-denial, and in a perseverance in all other Christian virtues to the end of our days. And if we thus follow Christ in this world, we may humbly hope and trust that we shall never be separated from him in the next; but that where He is, there we shall ever be, in glory and happiness everlasting.

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SERMON VII.

LUKE xix. 41, 42.

And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

THIS is one of the many passages in the life of our blessed Lord, which shew the great goodness of his heart, and his tender feelings for the miseries of others; and how widely distant the spirit of the Gospel is from that of the callous Stoic, who, in equipping his wise man, has stripped him of his humanity, and made him proof against all the impressions of pity and compassion.

paſſion. For here we ſee Chriſt lamenting over the approaching deſtruction of a city, which had treated Him with the greateſt perfidy and ingratitude. It is ſaid, that, *when he was come near it*, ſo as to command the view of the whole place, *He beheld it*; he for ſome time fixed his eyes on it with a melancholy ſilence, ſadly reflecting the day was not far off, when, of all thoſe fair and ſtately buildings, no, not of the temple itſelf, *there ſhould not be left one ſtone upon another*. He wept over it, and broke out into this affectionate expoſtulation: *If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.* O that thou hadſt been ſo wiſe as to have conſidered, as thou ſhouldſt have done, thy condition, thou once happy and highly favoured city! hadſt thou but, even in this thy *extremity*, when God has made thee the laſt offers of his grace and mercy, been ſo wiſe as to have conſulted thy real peace and happineſs! but, alas! it is too late. They are now hid from thine eyes. God has withdrawn all the

means

means of thy ſalvation, and has irreverſibly decreed thy deſtruction.

But I chuſe to conſider the words in another light, *viz.* not as addreſſed to the Jew, or any particular nation, but as they are capable of being applied to every hardened and unrelenting ſinner, *If thou hadſt known, even thou, in this thy day,* &c. and from them, ſo applied, ſhall draw theſe two general propoſitions, which ſhall be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.

Firſt, That God has afforded to every man a day of grace, or ſufficient means and opportunity to work out his ſalvation, and do the things which belong unto his peace.

Secondly, That there is a time, even in this life, when theſe things ſhall be hid from men's eyes; when it will be impoſſible for the ſinner to repent and be ſaved.

Firſt, That God has afforded to every man the means of ſalvation; or, in other words, that

that He requires nothing of any man but what He has given him ſufficient abilities to perform, is one of the plaineſt truths which either reaſon or revelation teaches. For either this is true, or all our natural and beſt-founded notions of the divine attributes are falſe. He cannot be that infinitely holy, juſt, and good Being, which our beſt informed reaſon aſſures us He is, which his own moſt holy word declares Him to be, and which our own ſenſes ſo ſtrongly exhibit to us in the works of the creation. A cruel tyrant may aſk for *brick* where he *gave no ſtraw*; but an infinitely juſt and good God can never demand the end, where He has denied the means; or eternally puniſh men, for their not having done impoſſibilities. But we are not left to draw this doctrine only from the deductions of reaſon, clear and evident as they are, it is moreover plainly and fully delivered in the holy ſcriptures. For what ſenſe can there be in that ſolemn declaration of the Almighty in the Old Teſtament, *As I live, ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of the*

ſinner, but rather that he ſhould repent and live. Or how muſt we underſtand thoſe equivalent aſſertions in the New, That He *would have all men to be ſaved*; that He is not *willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance*, if He has denied to any the neceſſary means of ſalvation? Thus our Lord's lamentation over Jeruſalem in my text, would have been only a ſolemn piece of mockery, if God had not afforded the Jews ſufficient opportunities of repentance. And with regard to mankind in general, it would be very ſtrange if God, who has made ſuch an ample proviſion for our bodies, and our comfortable abode here, ſhould leave the far nobler part of us, our ſoul, quite deſtitute and friendleſs; that He ſhould ſtand by, like an unconcerned ſpectator, and ſee it overwhelmed with temptations, and ſtruggling with its follies, without reaching forth to it his kind and aſſiſting hand.

It is true, God does not think fit to beſtow an equal portion of his grace upon all

men; ſome are endowed with extraordinary gifts, who (as St. Paul and others) are ſeparated from their mother's womb for the ſervice and honour of their Maker: But then as more is committed to theſe men, ſo more will be required from them; and though ſome have greater, and others leſs, yet there is no man but what has ſufficient means afforded him of working out his ſalvation with; and as it happened to the Iſraelites, when they were fed with manna in the wilderneſs, that he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack, ſo may it be ſaid of this other heavenly food, the grace of God, that he that has the moſt of it has not more than he has occaſion for, and he that has the leaſt has as much as he wants. For God might as well have denied a man any means of grace at all, as have granted him ſuch as were abſolutely inſufficient; as it would be no more injuſtice to puniſh a man for his inactivity, who had neither hands nor feet, than to puniſh him who had both, for not doing the work of a horſe, with the ſtrength

only

only of a man. If then the judge of all the earth must do the thing that is right, we may be assured of this, as an undoubted truth, that in all ages, and under all dispensations, God has afforded to every man such a portion of his grace, as was sufficient to enable them, with their own sincere endeavours, to perform the several duties and services which He expected from each of them, and that the benefits of the great atonement made by Christ, may, by his infinite mercy, be extended to those, who, without any fault of their own, never heard the glad tidings of salvation. God calls himself the Saviour of all men, and Christ is said to have died for the whole world; whence it follows, not indeed that all men shall actually be saved, but certainly that all men are capable of being so, otherwise God is the Saviour only of a few, and Christ is dead in vain.

But, secondly, As there is a day of grace to every man, so is there likewise a day of *wrath*, when it will be impossible for the

ſinner to repent and be ſaved—when the things belonging to his peace ſhall be hid from his eyes. That without the grace of God co-operating with our endeavours, it is impoſſible for any man to repent as he ought, is a doctrine, which a ſerious reflection on the ſad corruption of human nature ſuggeſts to us as highly probable, but which revelation has ſo fully ſet forth, as to leave us no room to doubt about it. *Without me* ſays our Lord, (John xv. 5.) *ye can do nothing*. St. Paul tells us, *That it is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleaſure*, (Phil. ii. 13.) and in another place, ſpeaking of thoſe who oppoſe the truth, *If*, ſays he, *peradventure God will give them repentance*. So that we ſee repentance is the gift of God as well as pardon. The meaning of which is not, that God will act upon our minds with an irreſiſtible force, whilſt we ourſelves are entirely paſſive in the work of our converſion; for this is contrary to the whole tenor of ſcripture, as well as inconſiſtent with our natural notions of the Deity, but only that

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He will, by the gracious assistance of his blessed Spirit, render our sincere, but imperfect endeavours, effectual to our conversion. Without him, indeed, we can do nothing; nothing that can merit our pardon; but it is as true that He will do nothing for us, unless we first do something for ourselves. We must first be sincerely disposed to do our best, to make the most we can of the natural powers He has given us, in reconciling ourselves to Him, and then we need not fear but He will supply all that is wanting on our part towards perfecting our repentance. From hence appears the real truth and propriety of that seeming inconsistency in St. Paul's reasoning, (Phil. ii. 12, 13.) *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.* For it is no more than if He had said, Do all ye can towards your salvation, for then you may be sure God will do the rest.

And from hence alſo it is evident, that there is a time, even in this life, when it will be impoſſible for the ſinner to repent, and be ſaved; and this, upon account both of what is to be done by ourſelves, and what by God towards our converſion. By a continued and unreſtrained courſe of wickedneſs, ſuch a thorough change may be made in our nature, that we may be transformed into brutes and monſters. Thus revenge and cruelty may have taken ſuch poſſeſſion of our hearts, or we may have indulged ourſelves ſo long in filthineſs and lewdneſs, till we are tranſported with the malice of a fiend, or the wild and ungovernable luſt of a very beaſt. In general it may be affirmed of all evil habits, when once they have taken root in us, that they utterly diſable us for the work of repentance. Our underſtandings become ſo vitiated as to put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs. Our wills and inclinations ſo debauched, as to become the tools and ſlaves of every irregular appetite. Our affections ſo wedded to vice, as to make us inſenſible of all the charms of virtue, and

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all the allurements of godlineſs. Or laſtly, our conſciences, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it in a lively figure, may be ſeared with a hot iron; unaffected with the checks of ſhame, the alarms of fear, or the ſtings of guilt. In ſhort, the whole man may be ſo enſlaved, and ſold under ſin, ſo dead in treſpaſſes, that it may require the ſame Almighty power to rouſe him into a ſenſe of his condition, as to recall the dead from their graves. But tho' God not only may, but has ſometimes actually exhibited ſuch a ſtupendous inſtance of his mercy, and therefore when we ſay it is impoſſible for the ſinner to repent, we only mean it is ordinarily ſo, or according to the common courſe of things, yet we may be ſure, that He does not work miracles in the moral world, any more than in the natural, without the higheſt and moſt extraordinary reaſon; and it would be the ſame raſh preſumption to continue in ſin, upon a perſuaſion that God will certainly interpoſe his grace, and miraculouſly reclaim us, as it would be in a man to run upon certain death, in the hope that God would immediately re-

ſtore him to life. For what ground have we to expect that He will work ſuch a miracle on our behalf? Is it not much more reaſonable to fear that He will wholly withdraw his ſpirit from us, which we have for ſo long a time deſpiſed and rejected, and leave us to ourſelves in that diſmal ſtate to which our own obſtinacy has brought us! Nay, has He not declared that He will do ſo? We are required to ſeek the Lord, whilſt He may be found. For that there is a time, when though we ſhould ſeek Him, He will not be found by us; and that becauſe He had formerly called unto us, and we would not anſwer Him, He had ſtretched out his hand to us, and we would not regard it. We are aſſured that God's Spirit will not always ſtrive with man, but will after a proper forbearance, give up the wicked to a reprobate mind, to follow their own hearts luſts, and to walk in their own councils. There is indeed an accepted time, and a day of ſalvation, during which God doth freely offer his grace, and tender his mercy to us; but if we let this day ſlip, a diſmal night of

darkneſs

darkneſs and deſpair cometh, when no man can work; when the things belonging to our peace ſhall be hid from our eyes; when, as the Prophet ſpeaks, *we ſhall grope for the wall like the blind, and ſtumble at noon-day, as in the night, and be in deſolate places as dead men!* The gates of heaven are, it is true, ever open to the ſincere penitent; God having declared, that *whenſoever the wicked man turneth away from the wickedneſs he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſave his ſoul alive.* But it is no where ſaid, that any wicked man may turn and repent when he pleaſes. He may, we ſee, bring himſelf into ſuch a ſtate, that he cannot repent, without ſuch an extraordinary interpoſition of divine grace, as he has no reaſon to expect.

There is then to every man a certain time appointed, when he will be deprived of all the means of grace, unleſs he makes a due uſe of them before that time comes. Not a particular hour, day, or year; but is ſooner or later, according to the progreſs and *proficiency*

ficiency of the ſinner, according as he makes more or leſs haſte to fill up the meaſure of his iniquities, to have his heart hardened, and his conſcience ſeared.

And thus, I hope, it ſufficiently appears, how applicable this lamentation of our Lord over Jeruſalem is to every hardened ſinner, and that God obſerves the ſame meaſures of juſtice towards all men, as He did to his own peculiar people, by firſt affording them ſufficient means of grace, and then, after they have for ſome time abuſed theſe, entirely withdrawing all means from them.

There are two very important reflections which the foregoing diſcourſe naturally ſuggeſts to us, and with which I ſhall conclude.

Has, then, God vouchſafed a day of grace to every man? No man, then, ſhould too haſtily deſpair of mercy; for though his day may be far ſpent, it may yet ſtill continue. There may be ſtill a *twilight* of grace, during which, if he does but beſtir himſelf with

with double diligence, he may finiſh the work of his ſalvation before the night overtakes him. The buſineſs we have to do is of ſo momentous a nature, and the danger of miſcarrying in it ſo great, that it becomes every man, how well qualified he may be for it, to work with fear and trembling; but he who will not be perſuaded but that, let him do what he will, his labour will be in vain, both diſables himſelf from doing what is required on his part towards his converſion; and, by being ſo injurious to the divine mercy, provokes God to deny him all the neceſſary help on his part; unleſs, perhaps, we may ſuppoſe that there may be ſome merit even in deſpair; ſomething, at leaſt, which may move the compaſſion of an all-merciful God towards a wretch, whoſe offence ariſeth from an exceſs of contrition and humility. There cannot, indeed, be a more pitiable object than a deſpairing ſinner; for what can be more ſo than the man who looks upon himſelf as accurſed of God, and irreverſibly decreed to damnation; and yet even ſuch a ſtate is far preferable to that

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of the obdurate and unrelenting ſinner, who is quite inſenſible of his danger. For deſpair ariſes from a deep conviction of guilt and unworthineſs of pardon. It ſhews that the man has not yet loſt all his feeling; that he has ſtill a heart of fleſh, and a penetrable conſcience; ſo that what is the cauſe of his miſery, may, by the goodneſs of God, become the cure of it too. Theſe deſponding thoughts, as they are the laſt efforts of our departing virtue, may be the firſt acceſſes of a returning grace, and which have often proved effectual to a ſincere repentance and thorough amendment.

But, ſecondly, Is there alſo a day of wrath, a time when God will hide from our eyes the things belonging to our peace? From hence we may learn to avoid the other extreme of preſumption, or the continuing in ſin, on the confident hopes that God will certainly interpoſe his grace ſome time or other, and bring us to repentance. A reſolution of which it is hard to ſay, whether the wickedneſs, or the weakneſs of it be

greater. For who does not ſee the provoking malignity of a deliberate purpoſe to continue in ſin till God ſhall think fit to take us out of it? And is it not evident that the longer we continue in it, the leſs able we ſhall be of ourſelves to get out of it? Every act of ſin we commit makes a deep wound in our conſcience, and debilitates the mind for all holy purpoſes. Perhaps the next we commit may be the finiſhing blow, a mortal ſtab. Beſides, it is plain, the farther we are gone, and the greater is our proneneſs to evil, the greater degrees of divine grace are neceſſary to reclaim us. Now it is very unreaſonable to expect either that the greater, and the more eſtabliſhed is the dominion that ſin has got over us, the better ſhall we be diſpoſed to repent and forſake it; or, that the more unworthy we render ourſelves of God's mercy, the more bountifully will He beſtow it upon us. And yet theſe are the grounds upon which every man muſt go, who wilfully and preſumptuouſly delays his repentance. The happy medium betwixt theſe two extremes, is to lay hold of the pre-

ſent

ſent opportunity, with an humble confidence that our day of grace is not yet gone down; and, at the ſame time, with a religious fear, that if we let this day paſs by us, we ſhall never have another. *Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of ſalvation.*

SER-

SERMON VIII.

PSALM xix. 12, 13.

Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me. Then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

THIS Psalm is a sublime and animated hymn of praise and thanksgiving, which David offers up to the Most High God, on account of the two glorious manifestations He had been pleased to make of himself in the creation of the world, and the revelation of his will to mankind. *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament*

mament ſheweth his handy-work, (ver. 1.) *i. e.* Such is the order, beauty, and magnificence of the heavenly bodies, as plainly ſhew they could be the work of no other than the greateſt, wiſeſt, and beſt of Beings. But, above all, how loudly does the ſun proclaim the peerleſs majeſty of its maker, which cometh forth every morning with ſo much beauty and ſplendor, as a bridegroom cometh out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a ſtrong man to run a race, going forth with ſuch an amazing vigour and activity from the uttermoſt part of heaven, to the end of it again. From the works of God, David proceeds to celebrate his word, and the law which He had given to his people for the regulation of their manners; deſcribing it as a ſure, evident, and unerring rule of faith and practice, that it tends to enlighten and ſanctify, to rejoice and comfort the heart. *The law of the Lord*, ſays he, *is perfect, converting the ſoul, the teſtimony of the Lord is ſure, making wiſe the ſimple. The ſtatutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the eyes,*

eyes, (ver. 7, 8.) Possessed and actuated by an awful sense of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the great God of heaven and earth, the Royal Psalmist is smit with a deep conviction of his own and all men's vileness and ingratitude, and breaks forth into this expostulation; and yet, though God is thus great and glorious, thus good and gracious, who, amongst all the sons of men can understand his errors, or (as it is in the other translation) *who can tell how often he offendeth?* Behold, our sins are more in *number than the hairs of our head:* and then humbly begs of God, that He would both cleanse and absolve him from his secret faults, and also by his preventing grace keep him back from presumptuous sins; at least, that he would be pleased, never to suffer these latter to have the dominion over him, by establishing themselves into fixed habits. Then, says he, I shall be upright and innocent from the great transgression, *i. e.* then shall I be as perfect as it is possible for a man to be in this life, and consequently in that very state in which I can both live and die with com-

fort, and with a full assurance of God's mercy.

My business at present shall be to go over, and enlarge upon the several particulars contained in this prayer of king David.

By secret faults, we are not to understand what are commonly called so, sins that are committed in secret, without any witnesses to them. For they generally are of the worst sort, and are ranked under the head of presumptuous sins, but such as are secret to ourselves, which we are not conscious of at the time of committing them, being drawn into them inadvertently, and by surprize; and which are very properly called sins of infirmity. Such as, *e. g.* are that absence, wandering, and inattention which we are all of us, more or less subject to, in our prayers and devotions; a short fit of anger, occasioned by something very provoking and unexpected; a hasty, unguarded expression, an improper thought, or irregular desire, which we no sooner observe than we drive it out of

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our minds; and innumerable other ſmall deviations from our duty, which every man's experience and reflection will ſuggeſt to him. All which are owing to the weakneſs and imperfection of our natures; to our not being able to be always on our guard, or to have at all times an equal attention to our duty. But though it is impoſſible for us to be entirely free from theſe ſlips and failings in our preſent ſtate, yet is it in our power to be leſs and leſs ſubject to them. We may, by God's grace aſſiſting us, be more and more upon our guard againſt all the occaſions of committing them; and therefore it is our duty to pray with David, that God would cleanſe us from theſe our ſecret faults, that we may grow every day more pure and free from the defilements of them. For though perfection is not to be attained here, yet, if we love God and goodneſs as we ought, we ſhould both earneſtly pray, and heartily endeavour, that we may go on from ſtrength to ſtrength, from grace to grace, till we become worthy to *appear before the God of gods in Sion.*

It may be farther obſerved concerning theſe ſins of infirmity, that a general repentance is ſufficient for them; becauſe it is impoſſible for us to come to particulars, they being more in number, and, from the very nature of them, more liable to be forgot by us than any other ſins. For who is there amongſt us that can recollect every raſh and idle word, every indecent thought, and vain deſire, every imprudent and irregular action of his whole life? And therefore we may conclude that God, who accepteth according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not, will require no more from us than a general confeſſion of all ſuch infirmities and ſlight deviations from our ſtrict duty, which we were not conſcious of at the time, and which we have long ſince forgot.

David, having thus beſought his Maker to cleanſe him from his ſecret faults, goes on to implore the aſſiſtance of his grace againſt a much worſe ſort of ſins, *Keep back thy ſervant alſo from preſumptuous ſins.*

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A presumptuous sin is such an one as we did, or might know to be a sin at the time of commission, and yet, in spite of that conviction, were resolved to commit it. Most justly therefore are they called presumptuous, since every act of this kind is an open insult to our reason and conscience, an act of rebellion against our Maker, a defiance to his threats, and a contempt of his promises. Such sins become exceedingly sinful by these aggravating circumstances, and must be most provoking in the sight of God. I need not descend to particulars. They are well known to every man. And yet how grossly do many impose upon themselves, by confounding these sins with sins of infirmity? Which they are most apt to do with regard to sins of the flesh. Thus it is no uncommon thing to hear the lewd debauchee talking of his vices, only as so many little slips and failings, the unavoidable consequence of the frailty and weakness of his nature. For a sin of infirmity is, as we have observed, such a small deviation from our strict duty, as we are drawn into by surprize and inad-

vertency, and which, whilst we are committing it, we are not conscious of its being a sin: but all lewd and impure practices are acts of deliberation, are the acts of a man who knows what he is doing, and that it is what he ought not to do. Let not then the adulterer, the fornicator, or any other person that indulges himself in any kind of impurity, think to screen himself from punishment, under the shelter of human frailty; since his excesses are the effects, not of the weakness, but the malice and corruption of his nature, which he himself has been the author of, by siding with his passions against his reason, and so helping the servants to become the masters.

Besides the sins of infirmity and presumption which I have been considering, there is also sometimes reckoned a third sort, sins of ignorance; but very improperly: for either these are owing to a necessary and unavoidable ignorance, and so are no sins at all, since no man can be responsible for what he never did, or could know to be his duty;

or

or else they arise from a wilful neglect of the proper means of instruction, and so come under the head of presumptuous sins; for here our very ignorance is a deliberate act of wickedness. Let not then the lowest and most illiterate of our people, vainly flatter themselves, that as they know so little of religion and their duty, but little will be required of them by their Maker, since they must be conscious that their ignorance must be imputed to themselves, to their not attending upon the public worship as they ought, to their refusing the assistance of those who are both willing and able to instruct them, and to their wilful neglect of all the other means of information which Providence had thrown in their way; and therefore that they lay under the same dreadful sentence with all those who have eyes and will not see, ears and will not hear, a heart and reasonable soul, and will not understand and be converted.

David having thus begged of God to keep him from presumptuous sins, in the last

place beſeeches him, that though he ſhould at any time ſo far withdraw his grace, as to ſuffer him to fall into the actual commiſſion of any of theſe heinous ſins, yet, however, He would be ſo good and merciful to him, as not to ſuffer them to have dominion over him, by eſtabliſhing themſelves into fixed habits; for then it is, that we may moſt properly be ſaid to be under the dominion of our ſins. When we have for ſome time perſiſted in a vicious courſe, ſin gets ſuch a poſſeſſion of our hearts, that we are no longer the maſters of them. We abandon ourſelves ſo entirely to our luſts and paſſions, that we cannot hear the voice either of our reaſon or our conſcience. We cannot ſo much as reſolve to repent, or, if we do, we no ſooner reſolve than we break our reſolutions. So true is that ſaying of our Lord's, *Whoſoever committeth ſin is the ſervant of ſin*. The greateſt ſlave is not more ſubject to the power of his maſter, than every habitual ſinner is to his luſts and paſſions. To theſe he reſigns his reaſon and underſtanding; at their command he is ready to act the

vileſt

vileſt or the loweſt part, whether it be that of the profligate or the buffoon, the idiot or the madman. And from hence appears the extreme difficulty of a man's ever getting rid of any habit of preſumptuous ſin, and, conſequently, the horror which every chriſtian ought to have of falling into any ſuch: for to root up any habit of vice, and to plant the contrary habits of virtue in their ſtead, is to overturn the whole ſyſtem of our natures; is, in ſcripture language, being *born again*, and *becoming a new creature*; *having a new heart and a new ſpirit*.

I cannot leave this head of preſumptuous ſins, without obſerving, that the guilt of one of theſe ſins only, will effectually ſhut the gates of heaven againſt us. God has given no man a licence to commit any ſin whatever, and for the ſame reaſon that we are obliged to obey Him at all, we are obliged to obſerve every one of his commandments. It therefore highly behooves every man carefully to examine his conſcience, and to ſearch diligently whether there is not one

point

point in which he daily offends; whether he does not live in an habitual transgression of one particular law of his judge and Maker. And as for all the grosser acts of disobedience, such as an open contempt for God and religion, all profane cursing and swearing, all flagrant breaches of the great duties of justice and charity to our neighbour, and all notorious violations of the holy rules of temperance, chastity, and sobriety; it is hardly possible to overlook these, the guilt of them is so *glaring*. But there are other wilful transgressions of their duty which men do not so easily observe, nor so carefully attend to. Thus he who pays a proper regard to all religious duties, one only excepted, the receiving the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is apt to *amuse* and *lull* his conscience with some idle excuses and frivolous pretences of difficulties and obstructions, which it is in his own power to remove at any time, in defiance to a plain and express command, *Do this in remembrance of me*. So likewise he that is just and honest in all his dealings, and is at the

same

ſame time by no means wanting in the general duties of Chriſtian charity and benevolence, ſhall yet ſuffer his heart to be inflamed with envy, malice, or revenge towards ſome particular perſons; and ſeem to have entirely forgot, that the ſame God who has commanded him to be juſt and charitable, has likewiſe forbid him all envyings and grudgings againſt his brother; every kind and degree of malice, bitterneſs, and wrath. And thus alſo the man that abſtains from all outward acts of uncleanneſs and debauchery, ſhall yet commit every one of them in his heart, giving a free *ſcope* in his mind to every diſorderly appetite and wanton deſire; and yet he muſt know, that it is equally required of him to put away the *filthineſs both of the fleſh and of the ſpirit*; that his mind and conſcience muſt no more be defiled than his body; and that unleſs he be *pure in heart*, as well as in his outward actions, he muſt never expect to *ſee God*.

It is both an amazing and a melancholy consideration, how a christian, who has the guilt of any one presumptuous sin upon his conscience, can ever have a moment's ease, or ever close his eyes to rest, when he must know, that both sleeping and waking, he is every moment in danger of perishing everlastingly. For he cannot be ignorant of this great Gospel truth, that without repentance, which includes not only a sorrow for our sins, but an actual forsaking them, there can be no hopes of mercy; and yet that he is, every instant he breathes, liable to be called to his last account, without having time enough barely to be sorry for his sins, much less to forsake and amend them. What an alarming *thought* is this to any thinking, reasonable being, that one moment past, he may be for ever lost and miserable.

David having, in this manner, *asked pardon* of God for all his sins, whether of infirmity or presumption, and humbly craved his grace to keep him, for the future, from ever falling into any of the *latter*, or, at least,

least, that he would never suffer them to get the dominion over him, comforts himself in the assurance, that then he should be upright and innocent from the great transgression; *i. e.* that then he should be as pure and innocent, as it was possible for man to be in this mortal state; and therefore in the secure and full enjoyment of the peace, love, and mercy of his God and Maker, who could never require from a man the perfection of an angel.

And thus likewise may every private christian satisfy himself in the grand enquiry, whether his life and conversation be such, that he has nothing to fear, should God the very next moment call him to judgment. For if he has by grace kept clear, or at least heartily repented of, and thoroughly forsaken all habits of presumptuous wickedness, and has nothing else to answer for but his daily infirmities, he may then depart in peace, and meekly resign his soul into the hands of his Maker, with a well grounded assurance of pardon and mercy, through the

merits

merits of his Redeemer. He may certainly have the ſame aſſurance of this as David had, who had been guilty of ſome of the worſt ſort of preſumptuous ſins, but was a ſincere penitent; and no man, I think, has any reaſon to deſpair of mercy, who is in the ſame ſtate that the man after God's own heart was, at his departure out of this world; and conſequently, ſtands the ſame chance with him for eternal happineſs. But do not miſtake me. Far be it from me to aſſert, that the moſt unfeigned repentance is of equal value in the ſight of God with a life of innocence, a life untainted with the guilt of any groſs or wilful wickedneſs. The fatted calf may be killed, and other ſigns of joy made on the return of the prodigal ſon, but what is this in compariſon with that more ſolid aſſurance given to the elder brother, who had ſerved his father many years, neither had at any time tranſgreſſed his commandments, *Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.* What I mean is this, that it ſhould afford the greateſt encourgement to all returning ſinners, that

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though they are not to expect the ſame glorious reward with thoſe who have never in any material inſtance departed from God and their duty; yet that they, upon their ſincere repentance, may depend upon their being again received into the favour of their heavenly Father, and of partaking of the ſame mercy and goodneſs with the reſt of God's children.

And yet, ſuch is the dominion that ſin has got over men, and ſo *groſsly* has the god of this world blinded the eyes of its ſervants, that they are not able to perceive the plaineſt truths in nature. The moſt dreadful objects cannot alarm their fears, nor the moſt amiable allure their hopes. Neither the glories of heaven nor the horrors of hell, neither the mercy nor the vengeance of the living God, can prevail on them to exchange their bondage of corruption, for the *glorious liberty of the ſons of God.* In ſpite of reaſon and religion, in defiance to *common ſenſe*, they put *darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter.*

ter. They confound the rankeſt falſhoods with the moſt evident truths, and even prefer a curſe to a bleſſing.

May the grace of our good God ever keep us from this ſad, this unmanly ſtate! May it, moreover, cleanſe us from our ſecret faults, by enabling us to be continually getting ground of our many infirmities, to grow every day wiſer and better; ſo that whilſt we are thus walking on in our chriſtian courſe, *from ſtrength to ſtrength, we may at laſt appear with joy before the God of gods in Sion.*

SER-

SERMON IX.

EPHES. v. Part of the 5th Verſe.

Nor covetous man, who is an idolater.

THERE is no one character that has been more the ſubject of contempt and ridicule, than that of the covetous man. He has been the conſtant butt of the poets and ſatyriſts in all ages. Wherever he dwells, he is the jeſt and bye-word of all the neighbourhood. Every body has ſome ſtory or other to tell of him, of his griping and greedineſs, his low and ſordid practices. Our bleſſed Lord dwells long upon this vice (Luke xii. 15, &c.) and moſt emphatically cautions his diſciples againſt it, *Beware*, ſays He, *and take heed of covetouſneſs*. St. Paul,

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both in the text, and in other paſſages, treats it with a particular ſeverity. He places the covetous man in company with the vileſt ſinners, and even ſtigmatizes him as an idolater.

There are two ſorts of idolatry; the worſhipping of falſe gods, or the worſhipping the true God by images, or any other material repreſentations. Now it is the firſt and groſſeſt ſort of idolatry the covetous man is guilty of; for though he hath idols of gold and ſilver, yet he doth not worſhip the true God by or through theſe, but he worſhips the idols themſelves, purely and ſolely on their own account. They are his gods. He ſaith unto gold, *Thou art my hope, and to the fine gold, thou art my confidence*; for it is in theſe, and not in Providence, he placeth his chief ſupport; they are the objects of his higheſt regard and moſt tender love; even the bare beholding them fills him with joy unſpeakable, and his attention to them abſorbs every other care. What then, though he lifteth up his hands and his eyes

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to heaven, and calleth loudly upon the name of the true God in his prayers, (of which, as they coſt him nothing, he may be very liberal) all this is only a mock worſhip. The god whom he adores, is not that which has nothing from him but the fruit of his lips, and the proſtrations of his body, but that which has his heart, which he puts his whole truſt in, and prefers to every thing elſe; which he loves with all his ſoul, and with all his ſtrength. Accordingly, our bleſſed Saviour declares, that we cannot ſerve two ſuch different maſters as God and mammon, by which is meant riches; ſince the ſervices they require from us, will often claſh and interfere with one another; ſo that either we muſt *hate the one and love the other, or* we muſt *hold to the one and deſpiſe the other.* We have a remarkable inſtance of this in the rich young man, who came to our Lord to be informed by Him what he muſt do to have eternal life; and upon being told, that beſides obſerving thoſe commandments which God had made the indiſpenſible conditions of entering into life, he muſt moreover ſell

what he had, and give to the poor, and come and follow Christ through poverty and perſecution, it is added, that *upon hearing this ſaying he went away ſorrowful, for he had great poſſeſſions*, which he was very unwilling to give up for the ſake of Chriſt and his ſervice. And thus it is in other inſtances, where much leſs is required of the covetous man, than ſelling all that he hath, and giving to the poor. The dread of ſome trifling loſs or expence, will make him neglect many a fair opportunity which Providence throws in his way, of promoting the honour of his Maker, and the good of his fellow-creatures; and the hopes of a paltry advantage, will engage him in ſuch ſchemes and meaſures, as neither juſtice nor humanity, neither reaſon nor religion permit. He will have a mortal averſion for every expenſive virtue, and a ſneaking kindneſs for every gainful vice. In ſhort, what can be expected that is truly great and good, or rather what is not to be expected that is vile and wicked, from that man, who prefers his own dirty views to every other conſidera-

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tion, and dreads poverty much more than he does damnation? No wonder, therefore, that the apostle in the text bestows so harsh a *name* on the covetous man as that of an idolater, since he trusteth much more in his riches than in the living God; nay, since they are to him his sole attention and supreme delight, his very life and soul, nay, his Lord and his God.

But further, covetousness is not only so justly entitled to the imputation of idolatry, but of the worst idolatry, the most obstinate and incurable. For whilst we hear or read of the conversion of whole nations of other idolaters, the worshippers of mammon have been ever deaf to all instruction. Even a voice from heaven has no effect upon them. Penitents likewise of all classes are frequently to be met with, such as the reformed libertine, the drunkard become a sober man, the knave honest, the prophane religious, and even the proud man humble. But who ever saw or heard of a reformed miser? And let no one be surprized or offended at this as-

sertion. For it is supported by the authority of Christ himself, who affirms, that it is as impossible for those who trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of heaven, *as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle*: which plainly implies the impossibility of such men's repenting, since repentance would render them as capable of entering as others. And, upon his disciples expressing some surprize at this saying, He explains himself, by adding, with men, *i. e.* morally speaking, and according to the common course of things, it was impossible, but not with God, who, by his extraordinary grace, could call even such a sinner as this to repentance.

And here it may be proper to enquire how it comes about, that covetousness is thus distinguished from other vices by being so constantly attended with impenitency. Now, the reason of this may be, that whereas other sinners are sensible of their sins, and so are capable of being brought to a sincere repentance, either through the convictions of reason and religion, or by the

ſtings and reproaches of conſcience, to which at ſome intervals they will be ſubject; or, laſtly, by the ſad and ſober reflections which ſome dreadful calamity produces in them, all theſe will have no manner of effect upon the wretched miſer. For though he will agree with you, that covetouſneſs is a vice, and a great one too, he will never confeſs that he himſelf is covetous. What you call in him by that name, he looks upon as a virtue, and calls it prudence and frugality; and therefore all the arguments with which you aſſail him, will not ſo much as reach him. Thus, ſhould any true mammonite happen to be an auditor of ſuch diſcourſes as this, he would not look upon himſelf as any ways concerned in them, but would, perhaps, apply them to ſomebody elſe he had in his thoughts. For the ſame reaſon, he will be troubled with no reproaches of conſcience, neither will any calamity bring him to a due ſenſe of his ſins. In one word, how can a man repent of what he does not acknowledge himſelf guilty? Moſt juſtly therefore, as well as mercifully does our

bleſſed Lord ſo earneſtly call upon his diſciples to take heed and beware of covetouſneſs; ſince we ſee it is a vice of ſuch malignity, being no leſs than a forſaking the true and living God, and worſhipping a ſenſeleſs idol in his ſtead, and a vice, which, without a miracle of grace, there is no repenting of.

But here I am aware of an objection which may be made, not to the truth, but to the propriety of what has been now advanced. It may be ſaid, that the character I have been exhibiting, is that of a compleat covetous man; it being only ſuch an one, who in the text is ſaid to be an idolater; and that ſuch a character is ſo very ſeldom to be met with, that it is very improperly made the ſubject of ſuch diſcourſes as theſe, which ought to turn upon vices of more daily occurrence and obſervation. But is not the compleat villain, the compleat debauchee, or any other compleat ſinner, as ſcarce to be met with? For the ſame reaſon then, that it is proper for the preacher to repreſent in-

 juſtice,

justice, debauchery, or any other sin to his audience, in their full growth and maturity, in order the more effectually to check men's progress in their respective vices, so will it be as proper for him to give them a *full view* of covetousness, as it appears in its last stage, that they may heartily detest every resemblance of so ugly and frightful a vice, and carefully avoid all approaches to it. And there is the more occasion for his doing so, as the different degrees of this vice are oftener to be met with than is generally thought, and many there are who have made a greater progress in it than they are aware of. I shall therefore suggest to you a few hints and queries, by the help of which you may discover how far the infection of this sin has taken hold of your hearts. Are then your wealth and riches, the most frequent and agreeable entertainments of your private thoughts and meditations? Are you transported with an immoderate joy at any increase of your fortunes? Or do you feel as disproportionate a sorrow at any diminution of the same? Are you not rigorous

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exactors of your own rights, and unwilling to forego any trifling advantage to yourselves, though you might thereby do the most friendly and beneficial office to your neighbour? Do you find in yourself a reluctance to any works of charity, contributing nothing, or much less than you are able, and framing excuses for your doing so? Are you not sometimes guilty of vile dissimulation and servile compliances, either to advance or secure your worldly interest? Look into your heart. Consider well its particular cast and turn, its favourite attachments; and don't you perceive what party it would adhere to, in a contest betwixt God and mammon? That interest and filthy lucre would get the better of your duty; that you would chuse to hazard your soul rather than your *estate*? Do you not find yourselves disposed to serve God, only when the world does not interfere; and, contrary to the piety of David, only to offer unto the Lord of what does cost you nothing? Examine, I say, your own hearts, and according as you can discover in them more or

fewer

fewer of the aforesaid affections and attachments, you may conclude that you are, more or less, inclined to covetousness. And much does it import you to make this enquiry, since you see that every step you take in the ways of this sin, is a step towards idolatry. This is an enquiry too, which it concerns all men to make, covetousness being a vice which is not confined to the rich alone. Others likewise, even the most indigent, may be infected by it, and to the same degree; for it is an inordinate desire of acquiring more than we already have, and therefore may as well, nay, one would think, should more frequently prevail in those who have little, than in those who have much. Our blessed Lord certainly thought so, by his earnestly cautioning his apostles against this vice, who were all of them men of low and narrow circumstances; for such are under strong temptations, through the galling pressure of their wants, to relieve them by very unjust and violent measures. However, it is no uncommon thing to see men of the middle, and even of the inferior rank,

so

so tenaciously attached to their own interest, as to be entirely regardless of their neighbours. They will not depart one tittle from their own right, how much soever others may suffer by their doing so. They will not forego the most trifling advantage to themselves, let the gain or the loss be what it will to any other man; and, as for any kind or generous action, they have no more *notion* of doing any such, than of *cutting off an hand, or plucking out an eye*. So that the caution our Lord gives his disciples, *Take heed and beware of covetousness*, is directed to men of all classes, though it most nearly concerns the wealthy and the prosperous; it being matter of common observation, that the more riches increase, the more men are apt to *set their hearts upon them*; and we may all of us recollect instances of such, who, whilst they were in low or middling circumstances, passed in the world for men of a benevolent and generous disposition, have, upon a great accession of fortune, turned out scandalously sordid and selfish.

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And now having endeavoured to make out the charge brought by the apostle in the text against the covetous man, let us, before we conclude, hear what he can say (as almost every sinner will have something to say) for himself. He will ask you then, where is the sin, where is the idolatry, in desiring to acquire what, he thinks, will so much contribute to his happiness, whilst he has recourse to no fraudulent, oppressive, nor dishonourable methods? Or where is the great harm, after he has acquired them, of carefully preserving them for his own particular use and satisfaction? Is it not lawful for him to do what he will with his own? But he may be answered, that though a bare desire, or a moderate pursuit after riches, is neither sinful nor idolatrous, yet such a fond and eager attachment to them as covetousness is made of, is both, inasmuch as it is, as has been shewn, a renouncing of Providence, and a forsaking the God who made and preserves us; and is likewise generally attended by fraud and oppression, according to the observation of Solomon, that *he that*

maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent. And farther, though he cannot suffer in this world as a thief or a cheat, nor will his covetousness bear an action in the courts here below, yet there is above a dreadful tribunal, before which he must give a strict account of all his hoards and stores, of every *penny* he was worth, of every act of mercy which he has omitted, every miserable object which he hath *passed by on the other side.* He will then be convinced, that he had no right to any thing more of what he possessed, than what was necessary to supply all his reasonable wants and occasions; and that for all the rest he was only a steward and an almoner to the supreme Lord, to deal them out amongst his poor and necessitous brethren.

There is another plea, which only some particular covetous men can make for themselves, That they have such a numerous family, such a multitude of dependants to provide for, as obliges them to be thus careful and solicitous to get what they can,

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and to keep what they have got, ſince thoſe who come after them will have a full demand for all that they can leave them. You ſay you have a numerous family to provide for, you have ſo; a much more numerous one than you ſeem to be aware of, even the whole body of the poor that ſtand in need of your charity, and lay within its reach. For though your own family and dependants have certainly a claim to the largeſt portion of your ſubſtance, they have none to the whole. A conſiderable part muſt be ſet aſide for your brethren in Chriſt, for thoſe who have the ſame God and Father, the ſame Saviour and Redeemer with yourſelves; and if he who provides not for his own *is worſe*, he that provides for none but his own, is not *better than an infidel*. He cannot be Chriſt's diſciple, being deſtitute of that benevolence which is the badge and teſt of a chriſtian.

And this brings me to an obſervation with which I ſhall conclude this diſcourſe, *viz.* in what an amiable light our holy religion

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must appear to every man of a good heart, to every friend to mankind, by that charity and benevolence which is the very soul and spirit of it, and without which the tongue of an angel, the knowledge of a prophet, and the faith of a martyr, will profit us nothing. For as the want of this principle is the cause of the greatest part, and of the most affecting evils we meet with in this life, so the abounding of the same would make this earth we dwell on a second paradise. *Mercy and truth* would every where *meet together, righteousness and peace would kiss each other*. There would then be an inter-community of happiness. The abundance of one man in any of the comforts and blessings of life, would be a supply for the wants of another: and as it is for the honour of our religion, that a virtue of so beneficial and extensive an influence is so plainly legible in the Gospel, so will it be both for our glory and happiness, if we can shew it as plainly in our lives and conversations. For there is no one virtue that can so powerfully conciliate the favour of God and man to us, as this of

Christian

Christian benevolence. It has the thanks and blessing of all who feel the effects of it, and the good word of every body besides. And though, indeed, the brightest charity cannot excuse the continuance of any man in one wilful transgression of God's laws, yet will it cover a multitude of our slight failings and infirmities, and set the seal of God's pardon to the greatest of our sins, which we have sincerely repented of and forsaken.

God grant we may all of us experimentally feel the truth of this, to our present and endless comfort, for Jesus Christ's sake!

SERMON X.

LUKE ix. 26.

For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

AND is it possible that any one should be ashamed of Christ, who is indeed a Christian? For no man can be said to be ashamed of a person he never knew, or was attached to. Can he be ashamed of what is the highest honour, and the greatest felicity of his nature? Can he be ashamed of being a member of Christ, a child of God, and an

inheritor of the kingdom of heaven? How differently does he judge from St. Paul, who counted all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus his Lord, and whoſe croſs was his greateſt glory.

To be aſhamed of Chriſt and of his words, is either through the fear of ſome temporal evil to renounce our faith, or through a vicious modeſty to diſſemble and conceal it; inſtances of both which I ſhall point out to you in the following diſcourſe.

And firſt, Thoſe may be ſaid to be aſhamed of Chriſt, who, in order to preſerve their lives, or to ſecure to themſelves ſome temporal advantages, abſolutely renounce him and his religion; which was the caſe of all apoſtates, both in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, and in the latter times of popery. The former indeed denied both Chriſt and his words, the latter his words only; by giving their conſent to a ſyſtem of doctrines which was contrary to them. The former acted the more conſiſtent part. For it is

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certainly much more so to reject the doctrines of him, whose authority, as a teacher sent from God, you do not acknowledge, than to own his authority, and yet reject his doctrine. It is also a greater indignity offered to our blessed Redeemer, as disobedience to the laws of a prince, whom I acknowledge as my lawful sovereign, is more injurious and unnatural, than to those of one I have abjured. But, be this as it will, all apostates from Christ may be said not so much to be ashamed of him, as to slight and contemn him, by preferring before him things of infinitely less value and consideration. They do, as it were, spit in his face, and cry out with his murderers, not this man, but Barabbas.

Next to these open renegadoes from Christ, may be placed those cowardly believers in the *primitive* church, who, though they did not in express words renounce their faith, yet, to avoid persecution, were prevailed upon to join in the idolatrous practices of the heathens; such as the throwing

a few grains of incenſe into the fire at the altars of their falſe gods, or taſting of the meat offered unto idols; who were held in ſuch deteſtation by other Chriſtians, that they were not reſtored to the communion of the faithful, till after having gone through a long and ſevere penance. And I cannot ſee how thoſe common compliances of proteſtants in popiſh countries, in falling down on their knees on the elevation of the hoſt, or its being carried in proceſſion, is more innocent or excuſable; nay, this is a ſpecies of idolatry much worſe than that of the papiſts. For they worſhip what they believe to be God, but theſe what they look upon only as a piece of bread. They pay, I ſay, divine worſhip to a piece of bread; the act of proſtration being as ſtrong, if not a ſtronger expreſſion of ſuch worſhip, than if they had in ſo many words cried out, *I adore thee, O God*; words ſpeaking only a particular, but ſuch ſigns as theſe, by common conſent, an univerſal language: and if ſuch a coompliance can be defended, they alſo may be juſtified, who are reported, for

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the ſake of filthy lucre, to trample upon the croſs. For trampling upon the croſs does not more ſtrongly expreſs our rejection of the Goſpel, than proſtration before the hoſt our adoration of the ſame.

If it is alledged in excuſe for theſe compliances, that no more is meant by them than a compliment to the religion of the country, and that at the ſame time we pay it, we pity their error and pray for their converſion; it may be replied, that ſuch compliments neither become the Chriſtian, nor the man of true honour; and that the groſſeſt prevarications in the moſt ſolemn oaths and engagements, may be defended upon the ſame principle.

If it ſhould ſtill further be ſaid, that no deceit is hereby put upon the impoſers of theſe idolatrous practices, ſince they ſtill look upon us as infidels in our hearts; but the ſame may be ſaid of every liar that is not believed, who is nevertheleſs a liar for all that; as he is not leſs a thief, who hap-

pens to be apprehended before he can carry off what he has ſtole.

There is another excuſe made for theſe compliances, which is hardly worth mentioning, that there is no being preſent at, and obſerving the idolatries of the popiſh worſhip, without joining with the congregation in theſe practices; for no curioſity is to be gratified at the expence of a good conſcience; and we muſt reſt contented always to be deprived of the ſight of that, which we can never behold with innocence. In a word, as it is the duty of every man, when properly called upon, to give his teſtimony to the truth; ſo it can never be right to ſupport and countenance a falſhood, and a falſhood of ſuch importance.

But though the practice I have been here condemning, is ſo contrary to the principles of ſober ſenſe and ſound reaſon, yet what is recorded of Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings v. 18, 19.) is alledged by ſome as a juſtification of it. For, after having declared to the

prophet,

prophet, that from henceforth he would offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto any other god but the Lord, he immediately adds, *In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, I also bow down myself: And Elisha said unto him, go in peace.* From hence it is concluded that the two cases are parallel, and equally void of guilt. But whoever will examine the fact here mentioned with attention, will find it widely different from the case we have been considering; for Naaman's entering into the house of Rimmon, was only in consequence of his duty of attending upon his master; and his bowing himself down, a necessary circumstance of that attendance; for how could he avoid doing so, when his master leaned upon his hand and did the same? It could only be looked upon as an act of respect to his master, and not as an act of worship to the idol. And now what resemblance is there betwixt the behaviour of Naaman in this transaction, and that of those protestants,

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who, without any call but that of curiosity, enter into popish churches; and instead of withdrawing before the elevation of the host, voluntarily comply with that posture of adoration, which is required from all present, as a sign and test of their believing and acknowledging what is held up before their eyes to be the God who made, and the Saviour who redeemed them? In short, what resemblance is there betwixt an act of choice, and one of necessity? betwixt an act of a civil, and one of a religious nature? betwixt an act that cannot have, and one that can have no other than an idolatrous meaning? Lastly, betwixt the act of a man just emerging out of the darkness of paganism, and that of one who has long lived in the full blaze of the Gospel?

Next to the deserters from the faith, may be reckoned those who adulterate and deprave the doctrines of the Gospel. Amongst the foremost of whom stand the Jesuits in China; who, in order to advance their power and wealth in that country, have composed a mot-

a motley mixture of Christian rites and Pagan idolatry, and have struck up an unnatural union betwixt Christ and Confucius; allowing their converts to profess themselves Christians, and yet to retain some of their most idolatrous practices; such as the worship of the heavens, of their great prophet, and of their ancestors; and for which they have been reproached and condemned, by all the serious part of their own communion.

Of the same class with these grand corrupters of the faith, are those ministers of the Gospel, who, in order to recommend themselves to their people, do either in their public or their private instructions endeavour to soften its threats, refine away its precepts, or abate the severity of its morals; pointing out to them a smoother and shorter road to heaven, than the rugged paths marked out for them in the Gospel; like the false prophets in the Old Testament, who spake smooth things unto the people, and prophesied deceits, crying peace, peace, when there was no peace; and, forgetting the

character

character they bear of ministers and stewards of the word, not handling it deceitfully, but by the manifestation of the truth, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God, studying to please Him and not men; and ever remembering, that we are not to preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord.

Another instance of men's being ashamed of Christ and his words, is, when in compliance with the manners of a wicked world, they shew no regard to the laws He has given, nor to the pattern He has set them; which is in no case more evident, than in the modern and prevailing custom of giving or accepting a challenge, and the engaging in duels. A practice as weak as it is wicked; being not more contrary to all religion than to common sense, and is at the bottom the greatest act of cowardice a man can be guilty of. For it is assuming such a power over our own lives and that of others, which God Almighty hath never given us. He hath indeed allowed thee to take away the

lives

lives of other men in the necessary defence of our country, and our own lives; but in any other case, how does it appear that he has appointed thee to be the judge and executioner of thy brother. It is expressly contrary to the command of loving and forgiving our enemies; and the reverse of his example, who forgave his murderers with his expiring breath, and died for a whole world of sinners. It is no less contrary to common sense. For what? Because a man hath done me one injury, must I put it in his power to do me another, and a greater injury, nay, the greatest that can be? And how can the death of my adversary be any reparation of my injured honour? It shews indeed the violence of my resentment, but leaves my innocence as problematical as it found it. And yet this is called satisfaction, which can only mean the satisfaction of an enraged brute, but is quite inconsistent with the character of a gentleman, *i. e.* a man of gentle manners, and the benevolence of a Christian. It is also an act of the basest cowardice. For true courage is shewn in a determined

determined resolution to do what is right; and to abstain from what is wrong, in spite of all temptations to the contrary; but to be more afraid of a less evil than of a greater; of the contempt of men, more than of the displeasure of God; of a temporal, more than of an eternal evil, is a sign of a mean and abject spirit. It shews that the man is to be scared out of his wits by trifles; that he is afraid, where (comparatively speaking) no fear is. There is great reason to think, that this custom is what all men of sense condemn in their own minds, and heartily wish it were entirely abolished; and yet what very few of those who are concerned, have the resolution to break through. But what dreadful reflection must frequently pass in the mind of him who has dispatched his adversary, with all his sins and guilt, to his last account? What pangs of remorse, what stings of conscience must he feel, if he has any *bowels of compassion*, any the least remains of pity and tenderness in his heart?

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In the instances already produced, we may be said to deny Christ by our open rejection of his authority, and violation of his commands, through some base and worldly motive. There are others in which we may, in a more strict and proper sense, be said to be ashamed of him, when we dissemble our faith in him, and conceal, and, as much as we are able, keep out of sight every instance of our attachment to him. This we do when we are witnesses to any outrageous insult upon our holy religion, by the scoffers and profane, without shewing any marks of our disapprobation. We are not, indeed, to cast our pearl before swine, nor to risque our reproofs where they are like to answer no other purpose than to raise the contempt, or provoke the malice of those they are given to, by their considering them as pragmatical and impertinent; but when our age, rank, office, or profession, will justify the propriety of them, to be silent and unmoved when the mysteries and doctrines of the Gospel are blasphemed and vilified, is certainly to be ashamed of Christ, to be ashamed of owning

ing whose servants we are, and to look upon our Christianity as a reproach to us, neither deserving nor admitting of a defence.

Another instance of this vicious modesty is to be met with in the behaviour of those, who look upon it as a part of politeness and good breeding, to conceal from the notice of others every act of true religion and real piety. Thus in the performance of religious duties in public, they are extremely cautious how they give the *least* sign, or raise the slightest suspicion in others, of the least grain of piety in their hearts; and, if they should happen to be surprized at their private devotions, would be as much disconcerted and out of countenance, as if they were doing something very absurd. In all these cases, men act as if there was no medium betwixt enthusiasm and indifference in religion, betwixt hypocricy and dissimulation. A conduct this, unworthy the character of the true believer, and very prejudicial to the interest of religion; as it gives

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encouragement to open profaneness, and casts a damp upon real and unaffected piety.

There is one instance more I shall mention under this head, which is of those, who instead of having a proper and becoming notion of the character they bear, of being the ministers and dispensers of the word of God, are ashamed of their profession, and endeavour to conceal it, by assuming the dress and habit of meer laymen; which not only gives great offence to all sober-minded men, but particularly to the weak and injudicious, who conclude from hence, that such persons cannot be in earnest, but have taken up the profession only for conveniency and sordid views, without any regard to the duties of their function; and which, if it cannot be ascribed to licentiousness, and the hopes of being less observed in their follies, must at least be owing to a silly expectation of being more regarded and respected; in which, however they may disguise themselves, they will, upon the common estimation of the

world, be only upon a level with laymen of inferior rank to their own.

I shall conclude this discourse with two or three observations on the punishment denounced in the text against such offenders.

And first, From the particular punishment which it is here said Christ will inflict on such as shall have been ashamed of him here, as well as from the particular reward which, in another place, we are told will be bestowed upon those who have confessed him before men, and from the account given us in St. Matthew, (that Christ, at the day of judgment, will not only separate the righteous from the wicked, placing the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, but will also, in a particular manner, address himself to the charitable and uncharitable; from all these particulars I say) we may form no improbable conjecture, that at that great day of account, the whole body of saints and sinners will be separated and arranged in different classes, and such a re-

ward

ward or punishment pronounced upon them, as is suitable to their several demerits or deserts. And if this should really be the case, what a dreadful aggravation will it be of the punishment of the wicked, to have all their sins exposed to view, and to receive their sentence on such an occasion, and before such an assembly; and what a *transporting addition* to the joy of the righteous, to have their virtues and good deeds with the same solemnity published and applauded. Particularly what shame and confusion must cover the faces of those wretched sinners, when they see themselves in the presence of that Jesus whom they had denied, or been ashamed to confess before men; and hear themselves reproached and rejected by Him, when He appeareth in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.

Secondly, we may observe, That a great deal more is to be understood by the punishment denounced in the text, than is expressed. For as in the third Commandment, by God's not holding him guiltless who

taketh his name in vain, is meant, that ſo far from holding ſuch an one guiltleſs, or treating him like an innocent perſon, that he will look upon him as the greateſt of criminals, and inflict the ſevereſt puniſhment upon him; ſo by Chriſt being ſaid to be aſhamed of thoſe who have been aſhamed of him, is to be underſtood, that ſo far from his owning ſuch as his diſciples, when He cometh in all his glory, that He will treat them as the moſt infamous of ſinners, and expoſe them to the ſcorn and contempt of men and angels. And no wonder that they who have been ſo loſt to all ſenſe of gratitude for the mercies of their redemption, and ſo unmindful of the majeſty of their Redeemer as to turn their backs upon him, and purſue the verieſt toys and trifles, ſhould in their turn be rejected by Him, and feel the ſevereſt marks of his vengeance.

Thirdly and laſtly, We may obſerve, That if the being aſhamed of Chriſt and of his words will be ſo ſeverely puniſhed, a zeal for his honour, and a ſteady adherence

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to Him and our duty, in ſpite of all temptations to the contrary, will be as ſignally rewarded. Thoſe who have laid down their lives for Him and his Goſpel, or who have foregone the honours, pleaſures, and advantages of this life, rather than comply with ſuch practices as were contrary to the faith they profeſſed; thoſe who have boldly withſtood the moſt prevailing cuſtoms of a wicked age, and have never forfeited their innocence, nor departed from the purity of the Goſpel to avoid ſome temporal evil, or to ſecure ſome temporal advantage to themſelves, and who at no time have been afraid or aſhamed to confeſs Chriſt openly, and to obey his words. All theſe ſhall be publickly owned and applauded by Him at his coming, and obtain a diſtinguiſhed crown of glory, either amongſt the noble army of martyrs, the glorious company of the apoſtles, the goodly fellowſhip of the prophets, or be otherwiſe numbered with the ſaints in glory everlaſting.

SERMON XI.

ISAIAH xxxviii. 1, 2, 3.

In those days Hezekiah was sick unto death, and Isaiah the son of Amos came unto him, and said unto him, thus saith the Lord, Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live. Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and said, Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee, in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

IT has been justly observed, that there is no part of the history of good and great men which we are more affected with, or more desirous of knowing, than their be-

haviour in their laſt moments. Every thing they ſay or do at that ſeaſon is moſt attentively obſerved, and moſt punctually remembered. And no wonder, ſince we know full well that we ourſelves muſt one day be in the ſame ſituation. All the other parts they act upon the ſtage of life may be little regarded by us, becauſe we do not think they can ever fall to our ſhare, but that of the dying man we muſt go through; and therefore we cannot help obſerving attentively how they *who were honoured in their generation, and the glory of their times*, have performed this very part. Now we have in my text a particular account of the behaviour of a great king, as well as the beſt that ever ſat upon the throne of David, when he looked upon himſelf as a dying man; and my deſign is to make ſome general and uſeful obſervations upon this remarkable piece of ſcripture hiſtory, which ſhall be confined to the following particulars: The meſſenger here employed by God, the meſſage he was ſent upon, and the behaviour of the perſon to whom it was delivered.

And

And firſt, The meſſenger was the prophet Iſaiah, who was ſent by the Lord to king Hezekiah, to bid him prepare for his approaching death. A commiſſion which few would have coveted to be employed in. So uncourtly was the errand, ſo very unwelcome the news like to be to ſuch a man, *Set thine houſe in order, for thou ſhalt die and not live.* For, as the ſon of Sirach obſerves, *How bitter is the remembrance,* and therefore much more ſuch an authentic announcing of Thee, *to the man that liveth at reſt in his poſſeſſions, to the man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath proſperity in all things.* But the prophet conſidered himſelf as the meſſenger of the King of kings, whoſe commands he was to obey, and whoſe favour he was to regard before that of any earthly prince whatſoever. Not but if Hezekiah conſidered the matter rightly, he would be more inclined to thank and be pleaſed with the prophet, than to be offended either with him or his meſſage. For he was hereby made acquainted with his danger, and had time given him to prepare for it.

Proceed

Proceed we to consider the message upon which the prophet was sent.

Now the same solemn message which Isaiah delivered to Hezekiah by the immediate command of God, the same does his written word, the same does our own knowledge and experience continually repeat to every one of us. *Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live*; so soon, as each of these assures us, will the time come, when we shall receive the same summons, and so immediately, and without delay, does it behove us to be preparing ourselves for it.

By *setting our house in order* is meant, the ordering and settling both our temporal and our spiritual concerns. As to the former, it is certainly the duty of every man, who has any thing to leave behind him, before he goes out of the world, to put his affairs in such order, and so to dispose of the good things he enjoys, as may be most consistent with justice and equity; may best answer the several claims and expectations of his dependents,

dependents, and may give the leaſt trouble and vexation to thoſe who come after him. Now all theſe things require a good deal of thought and deliberation, and therefore had much better be ſettled whilſt we are in full health, than be reſerved for our death-beds, when our reaſon and underſtanding may be as weak and diſordered as our bodies; but, above all, when buſineſs of ſo much greater conſequence ſhould engage all our thoughts, in compariſon with which, all the concerns of this world are but mere trifles and very nothings.

The other particular implied in our ſetting our houſe in order, is the due preparation of our ſouls for the hour of death; that they may then be found in ſuch a ſtate, that we may *depart in peace*, and with a well-grounded hope of *entering into the joy of our Lord*; which aſſurance is only to be had from a timely repentance, and a thorough amendment. For, as to a death-bed repentance, that is full of the moſt dreadful uncertainties. We can never be ſure it is ſincere, or,

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if it is ſo, that God will accept it inſtead of actual obedience and real holineſs. Indeed, the moſt we can ſay of ſuch a repentance is, that it is better than no repentance at all; and that if it cannot make us happy in the next world, it may make us leſs miſerable than if we left this world with a hardened and unrelenting heart. In ſhort, the beſt preparation for a happy death, is a virtuous and holy life; and the beſt cordial againſt the terrors of it, is a good conſcience, when we can call upon God with the ſame ſincerity as did Hezekiah, *Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee with truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy ſight*; which brings me

To conſider, in the next place, the behaviour of the perſon to whom the prophet delivered his meſſage. It is ſaid, that as ſoon as Hezekiah had heard it, *he turned his face toward the wall*; the chief reaſon of which ſeems to be, that he might conceal from the prophet the terror and anguiſh of mind he

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was affected with, being ashamed to have such a witness of his weakness; for it is added, that Hezekiah *wept sore*. And here it may be thought somewhat strange, that a man of Hezekiah's character should be so exceedingly disconcerted upon this occasion, —that he should be so greatly alarmed at being told he must die, when, before Isaiah came unto him, it is said, that he was sick unto death. One would have thought that so good a man should have been better prepared for such a summons, even without any warning, even in the days of his greatest health and vigour, much more when he was confined to his bed by a mortal distemper. For the appeal he here makes to God is confirmed and justified by what the sacred historian says of him, (2 Kings xviii. 5, 6.) *that he trusted in the Lord God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him; for he clave unto the Lord, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments.*

But

But then let it be considered, that though Hezekiah's distemper was a mortal one, yet he might not himself think it so. He might be imposed upon by the false and flattering hopes suggested to him by his friends, and those who were about him, which is often the case of much less men than Hezekiah; or he might impose upon himself in his high conceit of his youth, and the vigour of his constitution, which he might promise himself would at length prevail over the virulence of his disorder. Besides, though he was certainly such a worthy and religious prince, yet there might be several reasons why he was so much dejected and wept so sorely, when he received such a peremptory message from God himself, *Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die.*

For first, Eternal life being but obscurely revealed under the Mosaic dispensation, and the sanctions of the law being purely temporal, nothing but temporal happiness being promised to the observers of it, and nothing but temporal misery threatened to the

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transgressors, the best of men, especially such as lived in that worldly grandeur and prosperity which Hezekiah enjoyed, could hardly help repining, when they were about to quit a world where God had bestowed so many choice blessings upon them, and were entering upon another, of which they knew and had heard so little; where indeed they might humbly hope that the Lord would still be their God, would still be gracious and merciful unto them, but where they had no positive assurance, no express promise that they should be happy, or even that they should be at all.

But secondly, As death at any time must have been considered as an evil by any person in Hezekiah's situation and circumstances, so much more to one at his early time of life. For as long life was one of the principal blessings promised by the law to the good and righteous, so a sudden and untimely death was one of the greatest curses denounced against the wicked; and therefore Hezekiah could not but look upon the mes-

ſage the prophet brought him, as a mark and proof of God's high diſpleaſure, which would the more ſenſibly affect him, as he might think the great zeal he had ſhewn in rooting out idolatry, and reſtoring the worſhip of God to its primitive purity, entitled him to a more favourable treatment rather to have his days prolonged to their utmoſt extent, than to be cut off before he had lived out half of them. Accordingly, we may underſtand his prayer as a ſort of expoſtulation with the Almighty: How canſt thou deal ſo hardly with me, O God! *Remember now, I beſeech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy ſight.*

Thirdly, Another reaſon for the extraordinary concern Hezekiah ſhewed upon this occaſion might be, the condition in which he ſhould leave his kingdom at that time, without any heir of his body to ſucceed him, and upon the eve of an invaſion from a very formidable enemy, the king of Aſſyria. It

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was not, therefore, ſo much his own hard fate, as that of his country he lamented, that it ſhould be deprived of its only guardian and defender, when it was threatened with all the vengeance and cruelty of a barbarous and enraged enemy, who was not more an enemy to the whole nation of the Iſraelites, than to their laws and conſtitution, to their religion and their God, from whom they had nothing to expect but utter ruin and deſolation, a cruel death, or a miſerable captivity; to have their temple defiled, and Jeruſalem itſelf made an heap of ſtones. The proſpect of ſo much miſery ready to fall upon his beloved country, may very well be ſuppoſed to have rent his heart with grief, and made the tears guſh from his eyes.

Fourthly, I ſhall mention but one reaſon more, which might very probably be the cauſe of Hezekiah's great concern upon this occaſion; and that is, the conſciouſneſs of his own ſins. For though, as I have obſerved, he was a prince of a moſt excellent character, of great piety and zeal for God's

honour, yet we are not to suppose he was faultless in all parts of his conduct. He might be conscious to himself of many sins, which were either a secret to the world, or are not recorded in history. The accounts we have of him are very short, and mostly confined to the actions of his public life, which were indeed highly commendable; but he is no where drawn at full length, nor are we let into his private life and conversation. However, there is one fact related in his history, from which we may collect, that he was too much addicted to excessive pride and vanity. For we read, (Isa. xxxix. 1, 2, &c.) that when ambassadors came from the king of Babylon, with much ostentation he shewed them all the riches of his house, his treasures, and his armories; for which he received from God, by the prophet, a very severe rebuke. It is evident also, from the hymn he composed on his recovery, that he looked upon his sins, whatever they were, as the cause of this severe visitation. *Thou hast*, says he, *delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for thou hast cast all my*

sins

ſins behind thy back. He muſt therefore, in the ſame manner conclude, that his ſins were the cauſe of his ſickneſs, as he did that his recovery was a proof of God's forgiving them.

Theſe are the moſt probable reaſons which can be aſſigned for Hezekiah's immoderate grief, upon receiving the prophet's meſſage: and it is evident, that of theſe reaſons, the two former cannot affect the true and ſincere Chriſtian. For ſince he has the happineſs of living under a diſpenſation *which has brought life and immortality to light*; ſince he is aſſured, that no ſooner *ſhall this earthly tabernacle be diſſolved, but he hath a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*; he can never look upon death as an evil, come as ſoon and as ſuddenly as it will, ſince it is his ſure and ſpeedy conveyance to a much happier ſtate; nor can he much repine at quitting things temporal, however ſhort may be his ſummons, when he knows full well, that he only exchanges them for things eternal. It is, indeed, one

petition in the litany of our church, that God would deliver us from ſudden death; but then we ſhould conſider, that all public devotions are ſuited to the general ſtate and condition of thoſe who uſe them; and that the greater part of mankind live in ſuch a manner, as to be but ſorrily prepared to leave this world upon a ſhort warning; but a truly wiſe and good man will think that ſort of death the moſt eligible, which is the leaſt painful, and is the ſooneſt over, without any of the uſual melancholy ſolemnities; ſuch as taking leave of friends, the tears and prayers of thoſe who love us, and the like; which ſerve only to diſturb and diſtract the mind, and to lengthen out the pains and the bitterneſs of death.

The two latter reaſons, which I have ſuppoſed to have influenced Hezekiah, may likewiſe, in ſome meaſure, affect us Chriſtians in the ſame circumſtances. For it is very natural for a man of a good and a tender heart, when he is on his death-bed, to ſhed ſome tears upon foreſeeing the calamities and

diſtreſs

diſtreſs which, after his deceaſe, are likely to fall upon his country, his friends, and dependents, or his neareſt and dearest relations: and as this is a natural affection in us, we may humbly hope that it will not be diſpleaſing to the Almighty. But then, though we may ſorrow as men, we muſt ſorrow as Chriſtians too. We muſt reſtrain and moderate our grief, by the conſideration, that we ſhall leave behind us the ſame wiſe and good Providence, which ever did, and will take care of all his creatures; and that, if it be not their own fault, our God will be their God, the guardian of our country, the patron of our friends, the protector of our widow, and the father of our children.

The fourth and laſt reaſon aſſigned for Hezekiah's extraordinary grief and concern, is applicable to us Chriſtians likewiſe, in the ſame ſituation, *viz.* the conſciouſneſs of our ſins, the remembrance of which cannot but be grievous unto us, when we conclude that we are juſt going to appear before the moſt righteous and holy God, in order to give

an account of all that we have done in the body, and to receive our ſentence accordingly, either to eternal miſery, or life and happineſs everlaſting. This ſorrow will operate very differently upon different perſons, at the hour of death. Thoſe who are conſcious of the guilt of many unrepented ſins lying heavy upon their ſouls, muſt be quite oppreſſed with grief, muſt weep bitterly, and refuſe to be comforted; whilſt thoſe who have made their peace with God, by a timely and ſincere repentance, muſt feel a leſs weight upon their minds; though even theſe can hardly refrain from dropping ſome tears, when they reflect how long they abuſed God's mercy and forbearance — how much greater returns they ought to have made him — how much better they might have been — how much more good they might have done in the world than they have done.

Having now gone through the ſeveral particulars of the remarkable tranſaction related in my text, and having made ſuch reflections

flections and obſervations upon them, as I thought might be of ſome uſe in a caſe, which will certainly one day be every man's own, I will beg leave, before I conclude, to put this queſtion to every perſon that now hears me, and profeſſes himſelf a Chriſtian: Suppoſing any of you were permitted to chuſe the very day and hour of your death, what is the time you would fix on? Would you not anſwer me, if you think well of the matter, At that time, whenever it be, when I ſhall have ſet mine houſe in the beſt order —when I have got all things in readineſs— when I am the beſt diſpoſed and qualified for my departure out of this world. Why then will you not immediately ſet about this very buſineſs, the putting yourſelf into ſuch a ſtate and condition, as, if you wiſh well to yourſelves, you muſt above all things wiſh to be found in, when God calls you to judgment? O how cheaply is the bleſſedneſs of an happy death purchaſed by all the ſtudy and labour of the longeſt life! I ſhall conclude all, with part of a prayer conſtantly uſed by a good and great man of the

laſt century *: " Add this, O Lord, to all " the grace and favour thou haſt ſhewn me " all along in life, not to remove me hence " but with all advantage for eternity, when " I ſhall be in a due preparation of mind, in " a holy diſpoſition of ſoul, in a perfect re- " nunciation of this mad and ſinful world. " And when I come to leave the world, " afford me ſuch a mighty power and pre- " ſence of thy good Spirit, that I may be " delivered from all conſternation of mind, " all doubtfulneſs and uncertainty about my " everlaſting condition, and at length de- " part in the faith of God's elect, to the " enjoyment of that happineſs, which thou " haſt prepared for them, through Jeſus " Chriſt our Lord."

* Dr. Whitlock.

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SERMON XII.

1 THESS. V. 17.

Pray without ceasing.

THE grounds and reasons upon which prayer to God is founded, are so very evident, that it is no wonder this duty has been so universally acknowledged and practised at all times, and under all dispensations; nothing being more natural than that men should apply to Him in their distress, who, they are persuaded, is perfectly acquainted with all their wants, and is both able and willing to relieve them. That He knows their wants, and can remove them, they can have no doubt about, as long as they acknow-

acknowledge his infinite wiſdom and almighty power; and that He is likewiſe always diſpoſed to be kind and gracious to them, they muſt be quite aſſured of, if they only believe that God is their maker. For they can never think that He can be regardleſs of any evils to which, by the condition of their nature, He has made them ſubject. *Like as a father pitieth his own children*, even ſo muſt the Lord be pitiful to thoſe whom He hath created in his own image. The objection, therefore, of modern infidels, that God is wiſe enough to know our wants before we aſk, and good enough to give us what is fit for us, whether we aſk it or not, and therefore that all application to Him by prayer, is not only needleſs, but impertinent; for it is deſiring Him to alter his will, which is fixed and immutable. This objection, I ſay, will be found, upon examination, to be a very trifling one; for I believe ſcarce any man was ever ſo abſurd as to think, that God knew nothing of his wants till he was pleaſed to inform his Maker of them, or any one ſo ſenſeleſs as to hope, that he could,

by his prayers, *teaze* the Almighty into a compliance with ſuch requeſts as it were neither fit for him to put up, or for God to grant. All who know what prayer is, know that it is intended to expreſs our firm belief in God, and truſt in his providence; that it is at the ſame time an acknowledgment of our own weakneſs and dependance, and of his infinite perfections, his all-preſent and all-ſeeing eye, his almighty power, his moſt conſummate wiſdom, and his never-failing mercy and loving-kindneſs.—That it is He alone whom we look upon as our ſure comfort and ſupport, the author and beſtower of all the good we enjoy or expect; conſequently that the temper and frame of mind with which prayer is accompanied, when it is performed as it ought to be, do fit and qualify us for the bleſſings we aſk; and therefore that all the change that is made, is made in ourſelves, it being the fixed and unalterable will of God to grant his favours to ſuch, and ſuch only, as are fit and worthy to receive them.

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To expect that God ſhould, at our requeſt, ſuſpend or divert the regular courſe of his providence, would be highly preſumptuous in us, as He cannot be ſuppoſed to do this but upon the moſt extraordinary reaſons and occaſions; yet we may humbly hope, that upon a certain foreknowledge of our particular circumſtances, He has in general ſo ordered the courſe of it, as to make a ſuitable proviſion for all our real wants and deſerts, and to procure us, if not the very things we pray for, ſomething elſe which is better and fitter for us. To bring under one view, to eſtimate and adjuſt ſuch an infinite and complicated a variety of caſes and incidents, is indeed a moſt ſtupendous ſpeculation. But can any thing be too hard for the Almighty? Or what difficulty is there which infinite power, directed by infinite wiſdom, cannot ſurmount?

If it ſhould ſtill be ſaid, that matter of fact and experience are on the other ſide of the queſtion; — that we do not find thoſe who are conſtant at their devotions, more

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ſucceſsful in their affairs than thoſe who never pray at at all; and accordingly it is the obſervation of Solomon, *That there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to him that ſacrificeth and to him that ſacrificeth not.* We anſwer, that this objection reſpects only the moſt inconſiderable ſubjects of our prayers, our temporal concerns; as for our ſpiritual ones, ſuch as the pardon of our ſins, and the grace of God, they are not at all affected by it, and therefore there is ſtill left ſufficient matter for our addreſſes to the Almighty. But farther it may be replied, that all obſervations about other men's deſerts, and other men's happineſs in this world, muſt be very vague and fallacious. We neither know how other men pray, nor what to call ſucceſs. We may ſee them, indeed, on their knees, and lifting up their hands and their eyes to heaven; but with what inward affections of mind and heart they pray, can be known only to God and their own ſouls. Or, what we call a diſappointment, may be productive of ſome

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greater good to them, or preventive of ſome greater evil.

Numberleſs are the directions in ſcripture relating to the due and conſtant performance of this duty, and the ſeveral parts of it. That the apoſtle's injunction in my text, of *praying without ceaſing*, is not to be taken in its literal ſenſe, is very evident, for then every other duty muſt be neglected; but that prayer muſt be the daily exerciſe of a Chriſtian, frequently repeated, and never laid aſide for any conſiderable time; and that beſides the appointed times and forms for our daily devotions, we ſhould likewiſe, in every hour of our conſcious life, lift up our hearts to God in ſecret, in ſuch *ſhort* ejaculations as ſhall be ſuggeſted to us, either by our own reflections, or by the various occurrences which paſs without us. Thus, *e. g.* whenever our former ſins are brought to our remembrance, we may ſmite upon our breaſts with the humble publican, with a *God be merciful to me a ſinner.* Or, when any of God's paſt mercies preſent themſelves

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to our view, we may give a vent to our gratitude in some such expressions as these, *Blessed be thy goodness to me, O Lord, who am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies.* The misery and misfortunes which we see befalling others, may draw from us a grateful acknowledgment of our own undeserved happiness, *Lord, what am I, that thou thus visitest me with thy favour and loving-kindness!* If temptations and enticements to sin surprize us, we may, with Joseph, repel them, with a *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Or cry out with St. Paul, *Let thy grace, O Lord, be sufficient for me.* When we unexpectedly meet with any injury or insult, or with any ungrateful returns from those we have obliged, this should make us reflect upon the multitude of our offences against God, and the base ingratitude we are guilty of towards Him; and put into our mouths that petition of our daily prayer, Forgive me my trespasses, as I forgive this man who thus trespasseth against me. If we are struck with the sight of any object which naturally displays

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the power or wiſdom, the greatneſs or goodneſs, or any other perfection of the Almighty; when, *e. g.* we caſt up our eyes and behold *the ſun coming forth of his chamber like a bridegroom, the moon walking in brightneſs, attended with all the hoſt of heaven; when we ſee the clouds dropping fatneſs, the little hills rejoicing on every ſide, and the vallies ſtanding thick with corn*; when we obſerve the *amazing* operations of nature, and its inimitable productions, or only conſider how fearfully and wonderfully we ourſelves are made, our praiſes and thankſgivings may be thus expreſſed, *Who is like unto thee, O Lord? Who is ſo great a god as our God? Thou art cloathed with majeſty and honour, and haſt ſet thy glory above the heavens. How manifold are thy works! in wiſdom haſt thou made them all. Thou art good and gracious unto all, and thy tender mercy is over all thy works.* All mementos of our mortality, and ſuch we ſhall daily meet with, may draw from us theſe pious ejaculations: "Lord, ſince I "know neither the day nor the hour of thy "coming, grant that I may be always ready

"to

"to receive thee. *Let me die the death of "the righteous, and let my latter end be like "his. Let me depart in peace, and enter into "thy joy.*" In a word, every unexpected appearance, either in the course of nature, the dispensations of Providence, or the vicissitudes of human affairs; every change in our own circumstances and situation, will furnish us with ample matter for our occasional devotions. They are these short and unpremeditated forms of prayer which I propose recommending to your practice in the remainder of this discourse, from the consideration of their great utility, and the many good effects which follow from them.

And the first and the greatest recommendation I shall mention of them is, what is indeed common to these, with all our other private devotions, the sincerity with which they are attended; for they speak the language of our hearts, and are the genuine effusions of our souls. When we enter the house of prayer, and join in the public worship, it may be with a mind wholly estranged

from the ſervice of God, and poſſeſſed with affections and motives quite inconſiſtent with true piety. It may be to avoid cenſure, or to obtain applauſe; to ſee, or to be ſeen; to comply with the faſhion of the place and company, or only to fill up a vacant hour; but when we lift up our hearts to God in ſecret, and none but He can ſee or hear us, we cannot but be in good earneſt; it is impoſſible we ſhould have any thing elſe in view but the recommending ourſelves to his favour, by pouring out our hearts, and laying out our ſouls before Him, and by making our words the echo of our thoughts. This is, indeed, worſhipping the Lord with a holy worſhip. This is ſerving him with truth, and a perfect heart; very different from thoſe formal addreſſes which are ſo often made to Him by others in public, and by which they can at beſt be ſaid only to make their compliments to the Almighty.

Another advantage attending theſe, and all other our private devotions, is, that they admit of greater fervency than our public ones.

ones. For here a truly modeſt and conſcientious man will be always on his guard, carefully watching every motion and geſture, every muſcle of his countenance, and every tone of his voice; ever fearful of allowing himſelf in any ſingularity that may catch the eye, or engage the attention of others, and make them call in queſtion either his diſcretion or his ſincerity: but when a man retires from the world, and enters into his cloſet, all theſe reſtraints are removed; he is at full liberty to indulge himſelf in all thoſe affectionate expreſſions, either in his words or geſtures, which the fervency of his piety ſuggeſts to him. There is hardly any room for exceſs. Not the moſt mortified and humiliating *ſigns* of ſhame and remorſe—not the moſt lively expreſſions of our joy and gratitude — not the moſt exalted ſtrains of praiſe and adoration, can be diſpleaſing to that God, to whom all things are naked and open, our very thoughts and intentions, every hidden purpoſe and riſing affection within us, who ſeeth not as man ſeeth; for man

looketh only upon the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart.

Another advantage attending our occasional devotions, and which is peculiar to them, is, that they are not subject to that distraction and absence of thought, which the best Christians have always complained of, both in the public and larger forms of their private devotions. Something or another, either from within or without us, will break in upon the mind, and carry it off from the great business it is engaged in. Now the little time that our private ejaculations take up, prevents all such inconveniencies. We must attend to them, and we can attend to them only; for they are the instantaneous emanations of our souls, no sooner conceived than brought forth. It is therefore the highest recommendation of this sort of piety, that it is necessarily accompanied with that attention, without which there can be neither fervency nor sincerity in our addresses to God. For a man can never have any concern about what he

does

does not attend to. His prayers muſt be cold and languid, or rather mere unmeaning ſounds.

It follows farther, from the nature of that devotion I have been recommending, that it is equally adapted to ſolitude and company, to buſineſs and retirement; and may be uſed in the midſt of our daily labours and employments, our ſtudies and converſations. For though ſolitude and retirement are the moſt kindly ſeaſons to cheriſh this ſort of piety, yet company and buſineſs do moſt plentifully produce it; and a ſhort mental prayer will neither ſpoil the one, nor interrupt the other. A *God be praiſed!* a *Lord have mercy upon me!* will ſoon be diſpatched. Such ejaculations are likewiſe ſuited to all the various occaſions, circumſtances, and conditions of human life, to every criſis and turn in our affairs; they are at all times ready at hand, when we *are ſitting in the houſe, and when we are walking by the way; when we lie down, and when we riſe up.*

Laſtly, The ſpecies of devotion I have been recommending to you, has a natural tendency towards eſtabliſhing in our minds an habitual piety, by preſerving in them a conſtant ſenſe of God and his perfections; of what we have to hope, and what to fear from Him; what we are ourſelves, and what we ought to be. They will keep us in a proper temper and diſpoſition, and better prepare us not only for the due performance of the ſtated and more ſolemn acts of devotion, but alſo for all the *changes* and *chances of this mortal life*; for *the time of tribulation, for the time of our wealth, and for the hour of death*.

So many and ſo great are the advantages attending our occaſional devotions, and ſuch reaſon have we to comply with the Apoſtle's injunction, in this ſenſe of *praying without ceaſing*. As to the particular forms of our ejaculations, we need never be at a loſs. The holy Scriptures, but particularly the book of Pſalms, will furniſh us with a great variety, ſuited to our ſeveral affections and *deſires*;

to

to the compunctions of guilt, and the pangs of remorse; to the cries of our distress, and the cravings of our wants;—to every exaltation of praise;—to every glory of gratitude;—to every pious transport of our enraptured soul. Here the sincere penitent may learn how to confess his wickedness, and be sorry for his sin, with all the becoming expressions of a broken and contrite heart. Here the humble supplicant will be instructed how to pour out his *complaints before God*, and to *shew him of his trouble*. The pious adorer of God's majesty will be taught how to speak of all his *marvellous works*, and of the *wonders that he doth for the children of men*; and the truly grateful man how to *sing unto the Lord as long as he lives*, and to praise his God whilst he has his being.

May what has now been offered to your consideration, have its proper effect upon all of us, by inspiring us with an habitual disposition to embrace every opportunity of sending up to the most high God all our

prayers and ſupplications, all our praiſes and thankſgivings; every pious affection of our ſouls, and every holy purpoſe of our hearts! So ſhall we almoſt *literally* comply with the Apoſtle's injunction in my text, of *praying without ceaſing*.

SER-

SERMON XIII.

Preached at *Bury*, at the Primary Visitation of *Thomas*, Lord Bishop of *Norwich*, *June* 7, 1753.

DEUT. xxxii. 2.

My doctrine shall drop as the rain: My speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass.

THE Song of Moses, of which my text is part, has always been reckoned amongst the many passages of Scripture, which, for the sublimity of the language and sentiment, are far superior to the most admired performances either of the antients

or

or moderns. The tender and endearing images, in which the goodneſs of God, and his ſpecial care over Iſrael are ſet forth—his affectionate expoſtulations with an ungrateful people—the dreadful denunciations of his provoked juſtice, have all of them ſuch a natural majeſty, as cannot but be exceedingly affecting to every man, who has any taſte or feeling for what is truly great and beautiful. The compariſon in my text is a very juſt and proper one. For no effects are more certain or more ſalutary, than thoſe which are produced by the dews and ſhowers of heaven; and virtue and knowledge are no leſs the genuine fruits of doctrine and inſtruction, which, therefore, Moſes declares, ſhould be as effectually and plentifully brought forth in the minds of thoſe who duly attended to him, as the fruits of the earth, by the ſeaſonable dews and rains which fall upon it: and, conſidering the affecting manner in which he ſets forth both the goodneſs and the power of God, what they might hope for from the former, and what they had to fear from the latter, he might

juſtly

juſtly promiſe himſelf that his ſpeech and doctrine would actually be attended with this good ſucceſs. But in many of the antient verſions, the words are rendered, not as a declaration of what would be, but as a wiſhing and praying for what ought to be. Let my doctrine drop as the rain, and let my ſpeech diſtil as the dew. This latter ſenſe of the words is certainly moſt agreeable to the known character of the Iſraelites, and to the reproaches of Moſes in what follows. But in either ſenſe, they will ſufficiently anſwer our preſent purpoſe, and the uſe we intend to make of them; which is to apply them to that eſtabliſhed mode of public inſtruction amongſt us, by preaching of ſermons. For the natural effect of a good diſcourſe either is, or ought to be, the real benefit of the hearers. But, ſince it is evident, that in order to produce this effect, ſomething is required on both ſides, on the part of the hearers, as well as on that of the preachers. For, to purſue the alluſion in the text, as there muſt be a proper diſpoſition in the earth to receive the dews and

rain,

rain or elſe no fruit will be produced. For what will the moſt kindly ſhowers ſignify, when they fall upon a rock? So what effect will the beſt diſcourſes have, when preached to thoſe who are no better than ſtones and rocks; who have neither ears to hear, nor a heart to underſtand what is ſpoke to them. Since, I ſay, ſomething is required on both ſides,

I ſhall ſet before you, in the firſt place, what is required on the part of the preacher.

And, ſecondly, what on our peoples; in order to render our diſcourſes from the pulpit, as uſeful and beneficial as they were originally intended to be.

And firſt, As to what is required on our parts. And here I am very ſenſible, who they are I am now ſpeaking before, and how juſtly the well known ſtory of the philoſopher's entertaining a great general with a formal diſcourſe on the art of war, may be applied to me on this occaſion; and there-

fore I ſhall endeavour to ſpeak with the modeſty that becomes me, affecting neither novelty nor refinement, and only ſuggeſting a few ſhort hints, which may ſerve to make thoſe things fully preſent to your thoughts, which you have long been acquainted with; and to excite both in myſelf and others, a ſincere deſire and reſolution to do our duty herein, according to the beſt abilities which God has given us.

But to proceed:—We ſhould always have in view the two great ends of all our preaching, which are inſtruction and exhortation; either to inform men of their duty, or to incite them to the practice of it. Where the firſt of theſe ends is propoſed, we muſt take all the care we can, that our diſcourſes be ſo compoſed, as to be eaſily apprehended by thoſe we ſpeak to.—That our language and expreſſions may be clear, eaſy, and unaffected, and ſuch as the generality of our audience may be fairly ſuppoſed to underſtand; otherwiſe, we may as well ſpeak to them in an unknown tongue: not that we are to deal in

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any low and vulgar phrases, or in any coarse or trivial conceits. There must be a certain dignity, as well as ease in our compositions, a manly and majestic simplicity. To say all in a few words. We must always endeavour at least, (though it be a happiness which few can attain to) to speak to our people in such a language as may give no offence to the judicious hearer, and yet be level to the lowest apprehension.

A sincere and steady view to the real instruction of our people, will influence the matter, no less than the style of our discourses. We should adapt them to the particular wants and circumstances of those we are to preach to. We shall well consider what are the duties in which they are most defective, and what the vices to which they are most addicted. Thus, for example, a discourse against luxury, covetousness, and want of charity to the poor, would be as little edifying to a congregation of indigent and necessitous persons, as one on patience

and

and contentment would be to the rich and prosperous.

For the same reason, we should abstain from amusing our audience with vain and idle speculations, with curious, but needless controversies; chusing rather to feed them with plain and wholesome truths, and to infuse that knowledge into them which will make them wise unto salvation.

Lastly, As we are ministers of Jesus Christ and his Gospel, we must not set ourselves up for mere preachers of morality and natural religion, but, whenever we have occasion to treat of these points, we should inforce them with Christian arguments and Christian motives. We should think ourselves obliged to make the truths which our great Master hath taught us, the precepts He hath given us, the privileges He hath granted, and the promises He hath made us, the constant subjects of our discourses. The holy Scriptures must be the principal magazine from which all our materials are to be drawn.

drawn. *For they are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

But as it is the business of such discourses to exhort and incite, as well as to inform and instruct, and of course must be directed to the passions, as well as to the reason of men, in those parts where such an application is proper, great care must be taken that the motives we employ may make their way directly to the hearts and consciences of our hearers, and may solely and entirely possess them. To this end we must avoid all rhetorical flowers, all tinsel ornaments, and frothy declamation; every thing that looks like ostentation and parade, or that savours of an over-weening fondness of admiration and applause. For such speech and doctrine will never drop as the rain, nor distil as the dew, but will rather resemble those hasty showers which never sink deep enough to produce any fruit. The eloquence which will do the business effectually, must be of

another

another ſort; it muſt be chaſte, grave, and manly; it muſt have a native ſtrength and beauty; it muſt have both the powers of reaſon, and the ſoftneſs of perſuaſion. The preacher himſelf muſt be as it were forgot, whilſt all the good thoughts he inſpires his hearers with, muſt ſeem to them to be nothing elſe but the genuine ſuggeſtions of their own minds.

A great and good prelate * of our church, ſpeaking on this ſubject, ſays, "That that ſermon is moſt like to have had its true effect, "which makes every one go away ſilent and "grave, and haſtening to be alone, to meditate and pray over the matter of it; and "not that which makes the audience look "lively and pleaſed, and ſets them all a "talking with one another." And this, indeed, is the way to make our words like the word of God itſelf, *quick and powerful, and ſharper than any two-edged ſword, piercing even to the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and diſcerning the very thoughts and*

* Biſhop Burnet's Paſtoral Care.

intents of the heart. It may be ſaid, indeed, and very juſtly, *Who is ſufficient for theſe things?* Or who can be ſo inſufferably vain as to pretend he is ſo? But then, though no man could actually attain to ſuch perfection in this divine art, yet ſhould every man ſincerely labour and endeavour after it; and the more he does ſo, the more nearly, with God's grace, will he approach unto it: whereas it is in this, as in other caſes, he that does not endeavour to do his duty in the beſt manner, will generally do it very ſlightly and imperfectly.

The ſeveral rules to be obſerved, in order to make our diſcourſes from this place produce ſo good an effect, are not ſo eaſily given, and would be better placed in a regular treatiſe on the ſubject, than in a diſcourſe of this nature. However, I will venture to mention two particulars, without which the beſt rules, though never ſo well applied, will be able to do nothing; and with which, and a moderate ſhare of taſte and judgment, we may do any thing.

The

The first is, that we really be in earnest ourselves,—that, like St. Paul, our heart's desire and prayer for our people is, that they might be saved; and particularly that, at the time of our preaching, we wish, above all things, that what we say may effectually move and persuade them—that our doctrine may drop upon them as the rain, and our speech distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. For this will keep us, on the one hand, from all that careless and slovenly behaviour, which very naturally makes our people conclude, that we look upon this holy exercise as an irksome task, which we are therefore glad to get over as soon as we can; and, on the other hand, from all the excesses and improprieties which we are apt to fall into, when we consider ourselves as acting a part, or contending for a prize. This, in short, will influence and direct every motion of our bodies, every feature of our countenance, and every modulation of our voice. And when we are thus affected ourselves, we shall

be much more likely to make others be ſo too. For men do much more naturally and ſtrongly expreſs what they feel, than what they only feign; and no ſentiments do ſo readily make their way to the heart of the hearer, as thoſe which ſeem to come directly from that of the ſpeaker.

So neceſſary is it towards making our preaching effectual to the good purpoſes it was deſigned to anſwer, that our people ſhould be fully perſuaded we are in earneſt ourſelves. Now this they cannot be, unleſs, which is the other particular I ſhall mention, unleſs our lives and converſations are of a piece with our *ſpeech* and doctrine; unleſs we are patterns and examples of all that virtue and holineſs we preach unto others. For men will always regard what we do more than what we ſay, forming their judgments of our real intentions and diſpoſition, more from our actions than our words. For the beſt compoſed diſcourſes from a bad man, will have no more effect upon his audience than ſounding braſs or a tinkling cymbal;

cymbal; no ſooner over, than forgot: whereas when a man lives what he preaches, —when he only inculcates thoſe truths upon others, which every body knows he believes and practiſes himſelf, this will beſpeak him the favourable regard of every candid and ingenuous hearer; this will give both life and ſtrength, both grace and dignity to all his arguments and exhortations. Accordingly * a great maſter amongſt the Antients aſſerts, that none but a truly good man can be a compleat orator.

Having thus laid before you what is required on our part, the preachers of God' word, give me leave, in like manner, to ſet forth what is required on the part of the hearers of that word, in order to render this office of our miniſtry ſucceſsful.

And firſt, it is requiſite that our hearers be previouſly acquainted with all the fundamental principles of natural and revealed religion, ſince otherwiſe our diſcourſes will be little regarded, or even underſtood by

* Cicero de Oratore.

them. It will be but little better than reading a lecture in the abſtruſeſt parts of the mathematics, to thoſe who are ignorant of the very elements of that ſcience. And this is one great reaſon, why ſo many of our people are ſo little edified by our ſermons. They are not properly prepared and fore-inſtructed for the receiving any real benefit from them; the fault of which is chiefly to be imputed to the parents, and thoſe who have the charge of educating our youth, who inſtruct them in any thing but the one thing needful, which is the firſt thing to be taught, and what they ought to know and believe *to their ſoul's health*. This ſcandalous negligence, it is to be feared, is much more common amongſt us of the eſtabliſhed church, than amongſt thoſe who diſſent from it. What pity is it, that the great bleſſings of ſecurity and eſtabliſhment, ſhould produce the unkind returns of neglect and indifference!

The ſecond requiſite in our hearers is ſincerity, or an honeſt and hearty diſpoſition

to make a right uſe of this holy inſtitution, by attending upon it with no other view than their real improvement, either in the knowledge, or the practice of their duty. This will prevent all thoſe idle conceits, which hinder men from making a proper uſe of what they hear from this place; ſuch as the mighty ſtreſs they are apt to lay upon ſuch qualifications in the preacher, which are the pure gifts of nature. A melodious voice—a ſoft and inſinuating addreſs—a graceful elocution, without which neither the moſt manly eloquence, nor the moſt affecting applications, neither the beſt good ſenſe, nor the cleareſt reaſoning, will be able to command their attention. No wonder, therefore, that ſuch hearers carry nothing home with them from our ſermons, or nothing that is of any ſervice to them; nothing but what dies away upon the ear, or floats for a ſhort time upon the imagination. No wonder that they are neither the wiſer nor the better for our inſtruction.

A third requiſite to edification by ſermons, is candour, or a readineſs to make all fair allowances to the preacher. This will incline us to excuſe all unavoidable failures and natural infirmities, to paſs over every little impropriety, and to give our whole attention to the important truths he ſhall deliver, though the dreſs he gives them may not be quite ſo faſhionable, or quite ſo graceful as we could wiſh. This candid diſpoſition would be more common, would but men well conſider (with the great Roman orator *) the difficulties and diſadvantages he lays under, who is to ſpeak in a numerous aſſembly on the moſt important ſubjects, while every body elſe keeps ſilence; and how much eaſier it is, as well as how much readier men are to obſerve the faults than the excellencies of the ſpeaker. They would then do the ſame juſtice, and ſhew the ſame mercy to the preacher, as they themſelves would hope to meet with, were they to ſtand in his place, and he in theirs. Very nearly akin to candour is

* Cicero.

A fourth

A fourth requiſite, humility; which will teach us to think modeſtly of ourſelves, and ſo the better prepare our hearts for the reception of the word ſpoken unto us. For one great obſtacle to men's proficiency by ſermons, is the contempt with which they are apt to look both upon the perſon and the office of the preacher. They think it below them to attend to the inſtructions of one, whom they conſider as their equal, or, it may be, as much their inferior, both in natural and acquired accompliſhments; or, if they entertain a better opinion of his abilities, yet they do not think it worth their while to liſten to him, who can only tell them what they knew before. But let ſuch conſider, that however mean and contemptible he may be in his own perſon, yet in the place he ſtands in, he is the meſſenger of the Moſt High, appointed by Him to declare, explain, and enforce his will; all He expects from us, and all we have to expect from Him: and though he may not deliver his meſſage with all the grace and dignity it deſerves, yet we ſhould pay a

reſpectful

respectful attention to him, for the sake of that God, whose he is, and whom he serves. They should remember that he does not preach himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord. They may likewise be told, that the design of sermons is not barely to inform us of what we were before ignorant (though perhaps even this might be of use to some of these fastidious hearers) but to remind us of what we have forget, and, above all, to incite us to the practice of what we do know, and have long been convinced of. Now nothing is a better preparative for all this than humility. For as this is nothing else but a due sense of our own wants and weaknesses, it will always keep the mind open for instruction, reproof, and exhortation. The qualifications and dispositions I have already mentioned, are what we must bring with us to the feet of the preacher, being previously requisite to the hearing the word effectually.

But there is, fifthly, another particular I shall recommend for the same purpose, which is necessary in the act of hearing, and

and that is the applying what we hear to our own particular caſe and circumſtances. Not that we are to ſuppoſe the preacher directly addreſſes himſelf to us, or points us out to the reſt of the congregation. This would be highly unworthy of him; but, like the man in the Syrian army, who drew his bow at a venture, and ſmote the king of Iſrael betwixt the joints of the harneſs, ſo he in his ſermons does not take aim at any individual, but only ſets himſelf againſt wickedneſs in general; leaving it to God's grace ſo to direct his words, that they may ſmite every ſinner to the heart. But though the preacher muſt not be conſidered as applying to us in particular what he ſays, yet we muſt be ſure to do ſo ourſelves. Thus, are the commandments of the firſt table the ſubjects of his diſcourſe? Look into yourſelves, your lives, and converſations, and mark well how you have kept all theſe; whether you have diſcharged that honour and worſhip, that love and gratitude to your Maker, which are therein required of you. Or is he inſiſting on any of the ſocial duties?

And

And can you honeſtly ſay that you have, in no inſtance, been wanting in that juſtice and equity, that love and charity, which you owe unto your neighbour? Or is he treating of thoſe duties which reſpect ourſelves? Aſk yourſelves the queſtion, Have I not ſadly failed in that chaſtity and temperance, that modeſty and purity which God demands from me? Or are the holy ordinances of our holy religion, or the glorious privileges and precious promiſes of the Goſpel held forth to us? Reflect upon your abuſe and contempt of theſe ordinances, upon your failure in the conditions on which theſe privileges and promiſes are founded. In a word, whatever vice he is reproving—whatever virtue he is recommending—whatever character he is drawing—look well upon the picture, and ſee if thou canſt not diſcover in it a ſtriking reſemblance of thyſelf. Liſten attentively to thy conſcience, and hark if it doth not tell thee *Thou art the man!*—Thou art the impious and ungrateful, the unjuſt and mercileſs, the filthy and impure, the profane and hypocritical

man

man, which hath now been ſet forth to thy view. By this means we ſhall bring every thing home to ourſelves which comes from this place, and apply it to our proper uſe and benefit.

But laſtly, There is ſtill one thing more wanting, in order to theſe diſcourſes having their due effect upon the audience; and that is, that the ſubject-matter of them ſhould dwell upon the mind, and warm the heart for ſome conſiderable time afterwards. There are many hearers, who, in the parable of the ſower, are ſaid to receive the word with joy, but having no root, fall away in the time of temptation. They come to church, it may be, with very good intentions and reſolutions, are very ſerious and attentive, and ſhew all the ſigns of their being really affected with what they hear; but all theſe good diſpoſitions are of a very tranſitory nature, ſcarce laſting any longer than while the words of the preacher are ſounding in their ears; for no ſooner do they turn their backs upon him, than all the good impreſſions he had

had made upon them go off, and they are just the same thoughtless people they were before. Not one vice is amended, not a single grace is acquired. If, therefore, you would be the better for your hearing God's word preached unto you, you must carry it home with you,—you must enter into your chamber, and be still, devoutly meditating upon what you have that day heard with your outward ears, that through God's grace they may be inwardly grafted in your hearts, and so bring forth in you the fruits of good living.

If this is not the effect of your hearing, every requisite I have mentioned is to no purpose; so that neither the best stock of previous knowledge, nor the most sincere intentions, nor the most candid disposition, nor the greatest humility, nor the most impartial and self-applying attention, nor the devoutest after-meditations, nor all of them together, will be of any value or significancy than as they contribute to this great end of all our preaching, the real reforma-

formation of your lives and converſations. It matters not how attentively you liſten to our diſcourſes, nor how much you are pleaſed with and commend them. Believe me, the beſt encomium you can beſtow upon them, —the greateſt honour you can confer upon us, as well as the greateſt kindneſs you can do yourſelves, is to practiſe what we preach; otherwiſe, every diſcourſe you have heard from this place, will only riſe up in judgment againſt you: and, I am afraid, it will be a bitter reflection that many of you will make hereafter, that you lived in an age and country in which the Goſpel was purely and freely preached unto you, and yet you lived and died like mere heathens; *as if the Sun of righteouſneſs had never roſe upon you, or you had never heard the glad tidings of ſalvation.*

But Oh, my reverend brethren! how much bitterer will be the reflection to us, how intolerable the thought, when we ſhall one day conſider what ſtrong engagements we have broke through, both to God and man,—

man,—what clear light and conviction we have acted againſt,—what guards and checks we were under,—what lively mementos of our duty were every day ſuggeſted to us,—how natural and eaſy it was, and almoſt a thing of courſe, for us to have wrought out our ſalvation. How will it make us gnaſh with our teeth, to weep and wail, when we cannot but ſee and own that we are the baſe and vile wretches, we are the fools and mad men, whom we have ſo often expoſed and declaimed againſt; and that after having for ſo long a time preached unto others, we at laſt are become caſtaways ourſelves.

God grant, therefore, that we his miniſters may ſo preach his word, and our people ſo duly attend to it, that we may both *ſave our own ſouls, and the ſouls of all who hear us!*

CON-

CONCIO

AD

CLERUM,

HABITA Apr. 21, 1761.

MAT. iv. 10.

Κυρίον τὸν Θεὸν σοῦ προσκυνήσεις, καὶ αὐτῷ μόνῳ λατρεύσεις.

Dominum tuum Deum adorabis, & ei soli servies.

RECtè a Cicerone dicitur pietatem justitiam esse adversum Deos *. Deo enim optimo Maximo cultum & adorationem summo jure deberi apud omnes in confesso

De naturâ Deorum.

eſt, qui vel Humani generis indiligentiam, vel Divinæ Majeſtatis bonitatem unquam ſerió contemplati fuerint. Hoc ſuadet recta ratio. Hoc ſacri Codices, identidem jubent & hortantur. Iidem vero codices, qui docent Deum eſſe colendum, docent etiam in unâ eâdemque naturâ divinâ tres perſonas (ut vocantur) ineſſe & ſubſiſtere ejuſdem Gloriæ, Majeſtatis & Divinitatis, cultumque ſibi proprium unicuique aſſignant. Patrem jubemur invocare ſub titulo creatoris, quem moderatorem ſibi vendicat hæc quanta quanta eſt tota rerum univerſitas. Filium ſub titulo redemptoris, qui infenſiſſimis humano generi hoſtibus, morte & diabolo, non ſine ſanguine multo & ſudore tandem debellatis, "ipſam "victoriam vicit, captivamque duxit capti-"vitatem." Sanctum denique Spiritum ſub titulo Paracleti, illuminatoris ac ſanctificatoris, cujus eſt errores ſimul & miſerias abſtergere, animum gratâ conſolatione permulcere, & ad cœleſtem gloriam quaſi manu nos ducere. Arriani autem, Sociniani, cæterique ejuſdem farinæ homines, dum pluſquam giganteâ audaciâ Chriſtum cœlo deturbare

turbare ſtudeant, tamen, quod mirandum ſanè eſt, eundem advenerari minimè dubitant, quemque pro Deo non agnoſcunt, ei divinos tribuunt honores. Talem igitur cultum eſſe idololatricum ex verbis modò recitatis, & aliis ſacræ ſcripturæ locis oſtendere conabimur.

Eſt profectó eximia quædam Supremi numinis præſtanſque gloria, ut ea debeat ipſa per ſe elicere omnes homines, totamque gentem ratione utentem ad ſe colendum, quæque efficit ut reliquis omnibus longè longèque antecellat. Nulla enim intercedit inter opus & opificem, creatum & creatorem, finitum & infinitum, media natura; quicquid limitibus circumſcriptum ſit, quantumvis excelſo gradu ſupra cætera ponatur, neceſſe eſt ut evadat infinito infinitè minus. Quomodo autem viro bono & ſapienti convenit, naturis tam magno intervallo a ſe invicem remotis, parem honorem adhibere, iiſdem precibus advenerari, iiſdem laudibus celebrare finitum & infinitum, æternum & nativum Deum? Profecto magnus ille terræ

cœlorumque Dominus nec Majeſtatem ſuam ita conculcatam diſſimulabit, nec impunè ſinet honores, ſibi ſoli debitos, novo & nomine tantùm Deo deferri, quem ipſe manibus ſuis fabricaverit. Sed non opus eſt ut hunc locum diutius urgeamus. Abſurdum enim & planè ridiculum eſt talem Deum advenerari, qui vel non intelligit ſe coli, vel ſi intelligat, colentes nihil juvare poteſt. Neceſſe eſt igitur ut ille, cui omnia omnium, non hominum tantùm ſed Angelorum, Archangelorum, & ſi quid ſuprà ſit, preces & optata eodem temporis articulo debeantur, ſit Omnipotens; utque omnia vel intima mentis penetralia præſens adſtanſque perſpiciat. Sive hoc, ſive illud dixeris, quæ poteſt eſſe pietas? Quæ ſanctitas? Quæ religio? Hæc enim omnia purè atque caſtè divino numini ita tribuenda ſunt, ſi advertuntur ab eo; ſin autem ille, quem pro Deo colimus, nec poteſt nobis opitulari, nec quid agamus animadvertit, quare ullos ei cultus, honores aut preces adhibeamus? Atqui ille, qui omnia poteſt, omnia ſimul permeat intelligitque, ſit neceſſe eſt non nomine tantum ſed & naturâ

turâ Deus: ex quo efficitur id quod volumus; omnem cultum religiosum, qui vero & supremo Deo non præstatur, tum impietatis tum stultitiæ insimulari. Hìc autem obiter liceat observare, quod infrà uberius disputabitur, ipsum verè Deum, qui omnia potest, quæ fieri possunt, non tamen efficere posse, ut Is, quem Ipse ex nihilo creaverat, idoneus sit cui cultus religiosus adhibeatur, i. e. ut res creata increata, finita infinita sit; nec potest igitur jubere ut talis a nobis tanquam Deus colatur; hæc est naturæ vox. Hoc rectæ rationis judicium de cultu religioso ei præstito, cui non competit vera Divinitas. Adeamus jam sacrosancta Dei oracula. A quo enim potius petenda sunt modus, fines, objecta, reliquaque cognitio, quæ ad cultum divinum ritè præstandum pertinet, quam ab ipso Deo. Ille profectò optime novit quomodo vult coli, utrum velit ipsi soli omnem cultum adhiberi, aliumve quemvis ejusdem honoris socium sibi adjunxerit. At, invito Deo, talem socium obtrudi posse nemo, credo, dixerit. Audiamus igitur de hâc re Deum ipsum loquentem Κυρίον τὸν Θεὸν

σοῦ προσκυνήσεις, &c. Quid ſimplicius, quid autem plenius dici poteſt? Eritne aliquis tam perfrictâ fronte, qui audeat huic divinæ legi exceptionem ſubtexere? In quâ ipſe legiſlator omnem exceptionem præcidit. Hâc lege ſemel conſtitutâ, omnes res creatæ, quantumvis eximiæ ſint earum naturæ, ab omni ſocietate ejuſdem cum vero Domino et Deo cultûs in æternum arcentur. Inſigne hoc Dei mandatum Arrianorum cauſam tam funditus evertit, ut nullum lapidèm non moveant quà labantem fulciant erigantque. At miſerè, ni fallor, et oleam et operam perdiderunt. Quæ ab iis dicta ſunt in hoc argumento huc tandem veniunt, "omnem cultum religioſum non eſſe ejuſdem dignitatis et ordinis, at alium alio inferiorem, eum verò demum cultum in hâc lege prohiberi, qui ſummus et ſupremus eſt; inferioris igitur generis cultum et ei præſtari poteſt, qui non eſt naturâ Deus. Eodem enim ſenſu accipiendas eſſe has particulas excluſivas ac in aliis ſcripturæ locis, ubi dicitur Deus ſolus ſapiens, ſolus bonus, &c. Sicut enim in iſtis non excluduntur à quali-

cunque

cunque bonitate & ſapientiâ quos Ipſe fecit, quemque ſecundum modulum ſuum, harum perfectionum participes, ita in hoc Dei interdicto ab omni cultu et adoratione excludendos, quos Ipſe colendos eſſe conſtituit, ſed potius includendos." O felicem iſtorum hominis induſtriam. O invidendam ſagacitatem, qui in eâ re tam ſubtile, tam ingenioſum diſcrimen excogitaverunt, in quâ prorſus ſilent ſacræ literæ. Conſtans enim illarum vox eſt, Deum ſolum timebis, Deum ſolum adorabis, Deo ſoli ſervies. Ne verbum quidem de cultu ſupremo, medio, aut infimo. Quod autem ſubjiciunt de vi particularum excluſivarum multum abeſt ut cauſæ illorum faveat. Quamvis enim poſito Deum ſolum eſſe ſapientem, ſolum bonum, non excluduntur alii a qualicunque demum ſapientiâ vel bonitate, a ſapientiâ tamen & bonitate, perfectis & infinitis, vel, ut verbo dicam, a verè divinis penitus excluduntur. Eâdem ratione etſi reliqui omnes in hoc loco, de quo agitur, non excluduntur a cultu civili, & ab eo honore qui unius cujuſque naturæ convenit, a cultu tamen verè divino in ſolidum arcentur. Liceat autem nobis adverſarios noſtros inter-

rogare, quid ſibi velint per cultum illum inferiorem, quem contendunt Chriſto ſuo poſſe adhiberi, ſalvo hoc Dei mandato? In Chriſto terminetur, necne? An in eo conſiſtit ut invocetur tanquam interceſſor tantùm & mediator cum Deo Patre, qui nihil habet de proprio quod petentibus largiatur, ſed a quo quaſi inſtrumenta omnia a Patre in illos derivantur. Sive hoc, ſive illud dixerint, eodem res redit. Chriſtus nimirum compellatur, invocatur Chriſtus, idque non ab uno homine, ſed ab omnibus, non uno loco ſed omnibus, non uno tempore ſed omnibus. Aut igitur intelligit ſe coli, & invocari, aut non; ſi non intelligit, fruſtra invocatur; ſi vero intelligit, omniſciens & omnipræſens eſt, adeoque verus & indubitatus Deus.

Adeamus jam divum Paulum qui ad Galatas ſcribens (4—8) ita depingit ſuperſtitiones ethnicas, quibus dediti erant priuſquam filii et Hæredes Dei facti ſunt per Chriſtum Ἀλλὰ τότε μὲν οὐκ εἰδότες Θεὸν ἐδουλεύσατε μὴ φύσει οὖσι Θεοῖς. At tum quidem ignorantes Deum ſerviebatis iis qui naturâ non ſunt Dii. Quibus verbis

verbis duo manifesté continentur, primò, divinos honores nemini tribuendos præterquam, ei cui reverà competit natura divina, nedum ei quem inani titulo insigniri, et nomine tantum Deum existumamus et profitemur. Hic est verus hujus loci sensus, quem ordo verborum postulat, quique cum frequenti usu ejusdem locutionis, tum apud reliquos sacros Scriptores, tum apud hunc ipsum Apostolum optimè convenit. Mirari igitur libet quomodo in mentem venire potuisset viri magni quidem nominis in re literariâ, ac proh dolor, partibus adversariorum nimium faventis, Apostolum per illud φύσει voluisse totum hoc rerum naturalium systema, quasi dixisset serviebatis Diis qui non existunt in rerum naturâ, qui nihil aliud sunt quam chimæræ nescio quæ, & vigilantium somnia: sensus adeò durus & accersitus, ut ipse vir magnus post novissimam recensionem ingenuè fatetur se errâsse. Alio igitur modo, sed non minus infeliciter aggreditur hunc locum interpretari; serviebant, inquit, Ethnici Diis, qui non habuerunt summum illud imperium in omnes res creatas à vero Deo concessum; quod solum est divini cultus fun-

damentum: quasi tale imperium iis concedi potuit qui non naturâ Dei, aut eos naturâ Deos dici potuisse, qui omnem divinitatem quam habent, olim non habuerunt, nec olim habituros.

Secundò, ex hoc loco patet Galatas, postquam Christi nomina dederunt, tum demum neminem coluisse præter eum, qui verus est et naturâ Deus; aliter futilis et plané ridicula esset hæc Paulina exprobratio. Quid enim! in promptu esset Galatis responsio. Cur tu, Paule, cultum illorum qui non sunt naturâ Dei nobis Ethnicis objectas? Annon idem facimus Christiani? Quid præstat igitur hæc nova religio nostra illi patrum nostrorum, à quâ, te auctore, defecimus? Sed non est, ut tantæ futilitatis infamiam tam magno Apostolo inureremus. Constat Paulo sua auctoritas. Constat Christo suus honos. Sarta denique tecta sunt omnia. Non enim Arrianorum Christum prædicavit Paulus, sed Christum verè Deum, ejusdem cum Deo Patre naturæ et majestatis. Claudet hoc argumentum insigne illud angeli testimonium

quod

quod Apocalipſεως, capite xix. commate 11, occurrit, iterumque, cap. xxii. com. 9, ubi Johannem ad pedes ejus provolutum, ut ipſum adoraret, ita alloquitur angelus ὅρα μὴ· συνδȣλος σȣ γαρ ειμι, και τῶν αδελφῶν σου τῶν ϖροφητων, και τῶν τηρȣντῶν τȣς λογως τȣ βιβλιȣ τȣȣ· τω Θεῶ ϖροσκύνησον. Vide ne feceris. Conſervus enim tuus ſum, et unus fratrum tuorum prophetarum, et eorum qui ſervant verba libri hujus: Deum adora. Cuivis hunc locum æquis oculis inſpicienti facilè patebit, cauſam, ob quam angelus cultum à Johanne ipſi oblatum repudiat, eſſe ejuſmodi quæ ad omnes res creatas indiſcriminatim pertineat. Omnes enim in eâdem familiâ degunt, ab eâdem manu aluntur, eundem Dominum colunt et obſervant. Hoc tantùm inter illos intereſt quod aliæ ad nobiliora, aliæ ad inferiora miniſteria vocantur, aliæ majori mercede conducuntur, aliæ minori. Si igitur is ſit Chriſtus, qualem ſibi fingunt adverſarii, nequaquam colendus eſt, ſiquidem ratione habitâ ſupremi Dei et Domini, ipſe etiam conſervus noſter. Hîc autem, contendit adverſarius, non agi de cultu verè Divino, ſed de

cultu

cultu civili tantum, ut vocant, qualem etiam hominibus, regibus ſcilicet et prophetis aliquando exhibitum fuiſſe a viris ſanctis legimus, quemque rejiciebat angelus, ut apoſtolico, quo tunc temporis fungebatur Johannes, munere indignum. Sed quam ineptè hæc dici facilè liquet, tum ex iis quæ præcedunt, tum ex iis quæ ſequuntur ἔπεσον ἐμπρόθεν τῶν ποδῶν αὐτοῦ προσκυνῆσαι αὐτῷ. Cecidi, inquit Johannes, ante pedes ejus, adoraturus ipſum; ubi manifeſtum eſt in facto Johannis notari imprimis finem propter quem factum ipſum fuerit culpandum. Nam projicere ſe ad pedes angeli non erat per ſe vitioſum, ſed eo fine ſe projicere ut ipſum adoret, et cultum divinum exhiberet; ideoque angelus non tam reprehendit quod fecerat Johannes quam prohibet quod facturus erat ὅρα μή, vide ne feceris. Quam male autem quæ ſequuntur τῷ θεῷ προσκύνησον cum præcedentibus cohærent juxta hanc interpretationem; ita enim enarraretur hic locus; Vide ne me proſecutus fueris eo honore civili, quem ordo & dignitas mea poſtulant, ſed Deum cultu religioſo adora. Profectò argumentum adeo frigidum et inſul-

ſum

ſum parum ſapit angeli gravitatem. Nec verum eſt angelum repudiâſſe cultum ſibi oblatum, quoniam ab apoſtolo offerebatur. Addit enim και τηρῶντων τους λόγους τούτου βίβλου· quæ verba ad vulgarem quemque pium et Chriſtianum hominem pertinent. Denique quod notatu dignum eſt, angelum non dixiſſe Deum coli, quemque Deus coli juſſit, nec Deum ſupremâ veneratione proſequere, alios autem mediâ aut infimâ, ſed præciſè, ſed ſimpliciter, nullâ interpoſitâ exceptione, Deum adora; quaſi dixiſſet, cultus, quem mihi præſtiturus es, Deo ſoli convenit, vide igitur ne mihi ipſum tribuas; alioquin rationi ab angelo allatæ nullam prorſus vim ineſſe quis non ſtatim videt? Quæ hactenus dicta ſunt hùc tandem redeunt. Cultum verè divinum nemini præterquam ipſi Deo tribuendum, ideoque cultum, quem omnes qui divinitatem ejus denegant Jeſu Chriſto, præſtant, illicitum eſſe et idololatricum, ab iis autem rectè coli qui verbo Dei fidem adhibentes, eum naturâ Deum voce et animo pronunciant. Ut verbo dicam. Si Chriſto competit vera divinitas, colendus; ſin minus, nequaquam. Hoc argumen-

gumentum tam miſerè torſit Socinianos, qui non tam honorificè ſentiunt de Chriſto ac Arriani, ut eò impudentiæ vel ſtultitiæ adacti ſunt, ut alii fidenter aſſeruerint Chriſtum non omnino à Chriſtianis invocandum, alii autem, inter quos eſt ipſe Anteſignanus Socinus, poſſe nos quidem ſine peccato cultum talem Chriſto præſtare, quamvis nec ei ſuo jure debitum, nec a nobis ullo Dei mandato requiſitum; quaſi nobis liberum eſſet pro arbitrio noſtro cuicunque nobis libitum fuerit divinos honores largire. At fatendum ſane eſt Socini diſcipulos magis ſecum conſtare quam ſcholas Arrianorum. Cum enim utrique in hôc conveniant, quod Chriſtum ſpoliant divinitate ſuâ, hi tamen ipſum advenerari non dubitant, illi vero prorſus reclamant.

Videamus jam quibus argumentis, vel potiùs argutiis, adverſarii fruſtra laborant idololatriæ crimen a ſe amovere.

Primò igitur perfugium ſibi quærunt in mandato divino, præ ſe ferentes non eſſe quod vel idololatriam vel qualecunque crimen reformident,

mident, dum neminem invocent, neminem venerentur, nisi quem ipse verus Deus coli & invocari voluit jussitque. At quem quæso invocari jusserit? Num Arrianorum Christum? Quid, qui tam fidenter affirmaverit gloriam meam alteri non dabo, creaturam honoribus sibi maximè propriis insigniverit, ad summum Deitatis culmen evexerit? Qui tam planè præscripserit Dominum Deum tuum adorabis, & eo soli servies. Cum tamen coli jusserit qui nec Deum, nec Dominum audit. Absit ut tantam levitatem, tantam inconstantiam ei ascribamus, qui est ipse sapientissimus, Apud quem "non est transmutatio, neque conversionis obumbratio." "Sit Deus verax, & omnis homo mendax." Manet igitur in adversariis idolatriæ labes, cum Christus, quem ipsi colunt, tam longè diversus sit ab illo Christo, quem lex divina nobis commendat. Nihil enim est in quo conveniunt præter nomen inane.

At secundò, Apotheωσιν quandam finxerunt adversarii quà, Christus post resurrectionem suam in divorum numerum relatus est, &

& divinis auctus honoribus. Easdem enim Scripturas, quæ docent eum esse colendum, docere etiam cultum illi deberi, non suo jure, sed Dei Patris liberalitate, & munificentiâ; nec, ut ita dicam, pro Christi patrimonio habendum esse, sed quasi mercedem & stipendium, quod meruit propter perfectam obedientiam Patri præstitam, & labores in humani generis salutem exantlatos; & quo fidem figmento suo concilient, omnia illa loca Novi Testamenti appellant in quibus dicitur "Deum Christum evexisse in summam sublimitatem extulisse, dedisse ei nomen quod est supra omne nomen." At non opus est lynceis oculis ut cernatur quam lubrico hæc nitantur fundamento. Posito enim cum Arrianis Christum esse naturam creatam, nec dignum tanto munere præ se potuisset, nec, si dignum, sustinendo parem. Nam, ut supra notatum est, omnis res creata, quantumvis excelso gradu ponatur, præ magno tamen omnium fabricatore pro servo habenda est, atque ita "ut cum fecerit omnia quæ precepta sunt ei, dicendum est "servus inutilis sum. Feci tantum quod facere debui." Quid autem in morte

subeundâ

ſubeundâ fecit Chriſtus, quod non fecit candidatus martyrum exercitus? Num querelæ locus eſſet ſperatum præmium meritis ſuis non reſpondiſſe, ſi cum his reliquiſque viris ſanctis cœleſtem & æternam illam gloriam conſecutus fuiſſet? An poſtulabant vel ejus præclarè facta, vel divina munificentia, ut iiſdem honoribus inſigniretur, & quaſi in eodem ſolio ſederent ſervus & magiſter? Eſto. Meruit Chriſtus ad hunc uſque gradum aſcendere. At fruſtrà, ni fallor, dabitur ei præmium cui non datur fruendi poteſtas. Fruſtra munus ei demandatur, qui illud nequit adminiſtrare. Poteſtne enim Arrianorum Chriſtus dum cœlo ævum agit & in terrâ verſari? Poteſtne eodem temporis articulo vota, preces & gratiarum actiones exaudire, quæ tam infinita hominum multitudo tot locis disjunctiſſimis ſimul fundunt, nec non corda uniuſcujuſque perſpicere? Aiunt verò ſcientiam hanc perfectiſſimam quam negavit ei natura, divina indulgentia ſuppeditavit. At, ſalvâ reverentiâ ſupremo numini debitâ, Deus ipſe efficere nequit ut una eademque res creata duo & diverſa loca ſimul occupet; ut ſit finita & infinita. Voces igitur ſacri codicis modò memoratæ aut de

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